

DEVELOPING A PRAYER CENTER FOR GREATER SPIRITUAL FORMATION

A THESIS-PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

This thesis-project explores the relationship between prayer and spiritual formation. Thirty Christians participated in a Prayer Center meeting, involving solitary prayer, meditation, collective prayer, and bible study. Participants were administered questionnaires before and after the meeting in order to assess the impact of the prayer experience on different facets of spiritual formation. Ten participants were administered open-ended questions requiring them to write about how the Prayer Center meeting affected them. Results support a positive relationship between prayer and spiritual formation. A practical plan is presented to improve the prayer life of the local church through participation in Prayer Center meetings.

CHAPTER ONE

DEFINING THE PROBLEMS AND THEIR SETTINGS

The Problems

Every Christian needs a spiritual transformation. Each Christian needs to grow to spiritual maturity. They need to become transformed to the image of the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. There are three important Bible passages addressing this important goal. The first passage is in the book of Romans:

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.¹

The above passage is shared by the apostle Paul. According to the context of the passage, we know that Paul is talking about the sanctification of a Christian life from chapter six through eight of the epistle to the Romans. He mentions that the Holy Spirit helps us to pray in times of suffering. The Holy Spirit will uplift our prayers before God. He will teach us to pray according to the will of God. Paul also reminds us that all walks of the Christian life, no matter in good days or bad days, will lead us to conform to the image of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

¹ Romans 8:26-29. Unless otherwise indicated, all Biblical quotes are taken from the New International Version (NIV).

The above passage reveals the fact that the Holy Spirit, our prayers, the will of God, and daily events (good or bad) are channels of spiritual formation which God uses to mold us to conform to the image of His Son.

The second passage is in the book of Ephesians:

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.²

The apostle Paul in this passage is talking about how to build up the body of Christ, which is His church. God has endowed His church with many gifted leaders and teachers. The purpose of those leaders and teachers is to help equip the whole congregation for ministry. The ultimate goal of the church leaders who equip church members for ministry is to help us conform to the image of the Son of God. Paul is here implying that ministry is not an end but a means to achieve a goal: to conform us to the image of the Son of God.

How can we reach this goal? We need to spend the entirety of our lives endeavoring to reach this goal in the same way as the apostle Paul did. The apostle Paul also tells us to follow his example in the book of Philippians:

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and

² Ephesians 4:11-12.

participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.³

From the above passage, we can easily mistakenly interpret that the goal to win the prize in verse 14 is a future reward. However, if we study the passage carefully according to its context, we will understand that Paul is really talking about Christ as the prize to gain (verse 8).

The apostle Paul in his mind had only one goal in his life, which was to gain Christ. What Paul means is that he is striving towards his goal of conforming to the image of the Son of God. He is not satisfied with what he knows about Christ at the time being. He had served the Lord for about 25 years already when he wrote the book of Philippians. He pioneered planting many churches already, and wrote quite a few of the epistles including the great book of Romans to the churches. He even had great spiritual experiences such as the vision of Christ and his ascending into the third Heaven. He should have been very satisfied with what he had in Christ, yet he still moved forward, hoping someday that he would exactly look like Jesus who suffered and arose from death.

³ Philippians 3:7-14.

God will use numerous channels in our lives to mold us to become like His Son, Jesus Christ. However, one of the most important channels is prayer. God, through prayer, will bring spiritual transformation to us. All Christians know about the importance of prayer.

It has been 500 years since the Protestant Reformation started on October 31, 1517. On that day, the chief reformer Martin Luther defiantly nailed a copy of his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle Church. If we say that the Protestant Reformation is a kind of spiritual formation, this spiritual formation is phenomenal and enduring.⁴ What is the reason that motivated Martin Luther to launch such a great spiritual formation movement? The answer is very clear: the Word of God. Why did the Word of God become so clear and powerful to Luther? The answer is the Holy Spirit through his prayers. We know that only through the Holy Spirit we come to understand the truths (words) of God,⁵ and through prayer the Spirit of God will enlighten us to understand Him and His truth.⁶

The words of God grasped Luther's conscience and he never gave up his conviction of the truth to the pressure of the Roman Catholic system. Luther said to the German king when he was challenged to recant his 95 Theses, "I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience

⁴ David A. Currie, "Shaped by the Word: Sola Scriptura and Spiritual Formation," in *Reformation Celebration: The Significance of Scripture, Grace, Faith, and Christ*, ed. Gordon L. Isaac and Eckhard J. Schnabel (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2018), 50-57.

⁵ John 16:13.

⁶ Ephesians 1: 15-19.

is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.”⁷

When Roland Bainton, the author of the book *Here I Stand*, talks about the prayer life of Martin Luther, he says that Luther was above all else a man of prayer.⁸ Luther devoted the first three hours of his day to prayer. He was a theology professor, and he meditated (prayed and asked help from God) upon the words of God day and night.⁹ As a result, the Holy Spirit helped him to understand the meaning of the righteousness of God. Luther said, “There *I began to understand* (that) the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith.”¹⁰ Through the understanding of the Word of God, Luther dared to start the Protestant Reformation, which has become one of the greatest spiritual formations in church history.

Spiritual Awakening Movement leaders like John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards were men of prayer who brought the spiritual transformation to England and America in the 18th century. John Wesley prayed four hours a day, and he even spent eight hours a day in prayer when he was old.¹¹ His influence on the spiritual

⁷ Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1950), 144.

⁸ Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 280.

⁹ Gordon L. Isaac, *Prayer, Meditation, and Spiritual Trial: Luther's Account of Life in the Spirit* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2017).

¹⁰ John Dillenberger, ed., *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* (New York: Anchor Books-Doubleday, 1962), 11.

transformation of America was great in the Spiritual Awakening Movement.¹² Jonathan Edwards who preached the sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” had an enormous transformation power on the congregation.¹³

Talking about how church growth is also a kind of spiritual transformation, Murray Moerman pointed out that there is a strong relationship between church growth and the prayer life of the leaders and congregations. He refers to Peter Wagner’s research on the relationship of the church leader’s prayer life to church growth as follows:

Dr. C. Peter Wagner has been researching the relationship of prayer to growth of late and this is something of what he has found:

1. Leaders of growing churches have learned how to pray.
In a Christianity Today poll taken in 1982, North American pastors indicated that they personally prayed an average of 15 minutes per day.

When Dr. Wagner repeated the poll five years later he found, in a sample of 572 respondents slightly biased towards evangelical pastors, the average time of personal prayer had risen to 22 minutes per day. In a further refinement, he found that Pentecostal and charismatic pastors invested an average of 46 minutes per day in personal prayer, compared to 17 minutes per day for other pastors.

The North American church, as a whole, is growing at only a very moderate rate in comparison with the rate of growth of the general population.

¹¹ Micah Cobb, “John Wesley’s Prayer Life,” *Thinking and Believing*, June 27, 2013, accessed October 4, 2018, <http://micahcobb.com/blog/john-wesleys-prayer-life/>.

¹² Christianity.com, “John Wesley’s Big Impact on America,” April 28, 2010, accessed October 4, 2018, <https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1701-1800/john-wesleys-big-impact-on-america-11630220.html>.

¹³ “What impact did the sermon ‘Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God’ have on the people of New England?” *jasminparks61093’s Blog*, February 5, 2013, accessed October 4, 2018, <https://jasminparks61093.wordpress.com/2013/02/05/what-impact-did-the-sermon-sinners-in-the-hands-of-an-angry-god-have-on-society/>.

Dr. Wagner goes on to compare the daily amount of prayer invested by church leaders in other nations.

In Japan the daily prayer time of pastors averages 44 minutes. In South Korea the average pastor invests 90 minutes per day in prayer. The church in Korea, at the turn of the century, was virtually non-existent. Today revival continues, and the largest church in the world for eight denominations is found in Korea. The total church represents nearly 35% of South Korea's population. Compare that to Canada where, 300 years after the introduction of the gospel, church attendance still does not exceed that percentage and a national revival has never swept our land.

In the Chinese 'house church' movement, leaders invest an average of two hours per day in personal prayer. Most observers consider the Chinese house church movement to be the most amazing and rapidly growing voluntary religious movement in history.

2. God is raising up intercessors world-wide for growing churches, movements and their leaders.

Paul Yonngi Cho, pastor of the largest church in history, prays an average of 3 to 5 hours a day. Larry Lea and Evelyn Christenson, who are the leaders of prayer ministry in America, invest an average of 3 hours a day in prayer respectively.¹⁴

Although prayer is vital to spiritual formation, I have discovered that it is hard for us to spend time on prayer. The late and respected Chinese Rev. John Pao, who was one of my ordaining pastors and also was the president of two seminaries in different periods of his life, told the congregation in a sermon that prayer was a very challenging spiritual discipline.¹⁵ He said that a Christian could easily sit down to read the words of God for thirty minutes but would face a great challenge in praying for half an hour.

¹⁴ Murray Moerman, "Prayer and Church Growth," *Regional Synod of Canada*, March 1989, accessed October 4, 2018, <http://www.reformed-church.com/Pioneer/mar-89f.htm>.

¹⁵ Rev. John Pao, "The Direction of Spiritual Devotion," sermon preached on October 12, 1995, at Home of Christ in Fremont, CA.

In the Old Testament period, God already told us that the Israelite people did not like to pray: “He saw that *there was* no man, and wondered that *there was* no intercessor; therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him; and His own righteousness, it sustained Him.”¹⁶

God was so appalled to find out that they did not have even one man to intercede for their plight so that God would hear him and the Israelites could be rescued. In the New Testament, even Jesus expressed surprise that we spend so little time in prayer:

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’” And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”¹⁷

Jesus relates the ‘faith’ in this verse (Luke 18:8) back to prayer. The story from verse one to eight is a complete unity. Jesus is trying to emphasize that we must have faith and keep on praying like the widow in the parable. The widow keeps on begging the unrighteous judge to hear her case. Finally, the unrighteous judge listens to her inquiry.

¹⁶ Isaiah 59:16.

¹⁷ Luke 18:1-8.

Jesus used this parable to point out that our Heavenly Father is much better than the unrighteous judge is. The Heavenly Father will definitely listen to our prayers. Therefore, we need to have faith in keeping on in prayer, and God eventually will listen to us according to His time-table. However, Jesus made an exclamatory remark when He concluded His parable. Jesus feels sad that there will not be many people who have faith when he comes back. I interpret this remark as Jesus reminding us to have faith in prayer. John Calvin said that prayer is faith. What Calvin means is that prayer expresses true faith in God.¹⁸ If we have strong faith in God, we will pray very often. Otherwise, we will pray very seldom.

Jesus also told the disciples explicitly that they need to spend time in prayer to prepare for His second coming: "Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."¹⁹

In the days before the second coming of Jesus Christ, we are easily distracted by lust of the flesh and the worry of making a living in this world and easily neglect to pray to prepare for His return.

How can we help Christians improve their prayer lives? How do we help Christians realize the importance of prayer for greater spiritual formation? These two

¹⁸ John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.20.2.

¹⁹ Luke 21:36.

problems are related and intertwined. Prayer life will bring us greater spiritual formation, and greater spiritual formation will improve our prayer life.

However, it is not easy to solve these two problems. I am going to write a thesis-project addressing these two problems and provide some ways of addressing them. I would like to develop a Prayer Center for greater spiritual formation. Through the Prayer Center, I will try to provide possible solutions for these two challenges above.

The Prayer Center will provide a good environment for prayer, which will bring us a good prayer moment. The Prayer Center will serve us more or less like the inner room where we can have a good time in prayer: “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.”²⁰

A good prayer moment will bring greater spiritual formation. In turn, the greater spiritual formation will motivate us to have a better prayer life. This is a cycle which will keep us praying.

The Personal Setting

Prayer is a tough spiritual discipline. Why am I so interested in dealing with this subject matter? I would like to start my story from the beginning up to the present moment for dealing with this tough spiritual issue.

²⁰ Matthew 6:6.

After I became a Christian for a short period, I got tuberculosis, and I needed to take medicine every day. I also needed to get a medicinal shot from the clinic every day. To me, that was a big drawback in my life. I felt frustrated because my health was weak. I couldn't enjoy the life of being a teenager, which was full of activities, fun, and adventures. However, at this time, God had become my only comfort in my daily life. I studied the words of God and prayed every day, especially in the morning. I felt comforted by God and He gave me strength to study.

After I had recovered from my tuberculosis disease almost two years, I found out that my disease came back again. When I woke up one morning, I coughed and lots of blood came out. I realized that my tuberculosis had come back again. I was so sad that day, and I went up to the mountain where there was a park and I prayed there. I had a feeling that I looked like I was in the situation like my Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane. I was very depressed as I prayed to God to heal my disease because my disease felt like a heavy cross that I had to bear.

However, after I prayed, I felt well emotionally. I was willing to be submissive to God no matter what the circumstances – even if my disease returned. After my prayer, I planned to update my mother and saw my doctor again. However, miraculously the next morning I found out that no more blood came out in my coughing. In my experience, the coughing up of blood would normally continue to show up every morning for people suffering from tuberculosis.

I was so happy, and I assumed that God had healed me through my prayer. From then on, my lungs have been normal and healthy. This experience strengthened my faith

in God and I trusted in Him to take care of my health in the future. This was the first experience which strengthened my prayer life. I began to put my trust in God for all my challenges in life through prayer.

In December of 1989, God told me that I needed to respond to His calling to serve Him as a full-time minister. I was very eager to become a full-time pastor, for I knew that it is the most glorious job in the world. God called me by providing me with many signs.

However, I was very hesitant to respond to His calling until December 1989. One morning, after I had prayed for almost two hours, I started to sing a song very quietly. This song was about how we should be very determined to follow the calling of God, even if we may be in a very difficult situation. I was so touched by this song that I cried in presence of the Lord. I was just like a child being comforted by his mother's love as he cried in her bosom. I also felt ashamed by my lack of trust in God. I knew that this experience came from the touching of the Holy Spirit. He touched me and urged me again to respond to the calling of God, who wanted me to be a full-time servant of the gospel.

After this experience, I was determined to respond to God's calling to be a full-time pastor despite my poor health. For the second time, God changed my life through my prayer. In conclusion, I can say that God has strengthened my prayer life through numerous answered prayers, but the above two are the major and critical ones in my prayer life.

The Ministry Setting

God molded me to have passion for prayer due to the needs of my frail health. I trust God through prayer to enable me to overcome challenges in my life. On the other hand, God has put a love of prayer in my heart. I love to study the literature of prayer, and I also love to teach prayer and to do the ministry of prayer.

When I was a graduate student at San Diego State University, I was given the opportunity to lead the ministry in prayer for the Friday Night Fellowship. Being a prayer coordinator for the Fellowship, I developed three small prayer groups in the Fellowship. In the summer, I was invited to be the workshop speaker on prayer ministry for a particular year.

After becoming a pastor, I developed prayer courses for the church. The Study of Prayer, which has fourteen lessons, was the first course I developed for the Sunday school class. The Practice of Prayer, which has twelve lessons, is a training course in which I teach church members how to pray step by step for a half hour every day.

I also developed a logo for prayer ministry in my church, which is called 432, for members to get involved and receive training in prayer ministry. The number '4' represents four types of prayer activities in the church: 1) Wednesday prayer meeting, 2) Monday hotline prayer ministry, 3) a weekly prayer opportunity for 24 hours from noon Friday to noon Saturday called the Great Commission Prayer Day ministry, and 4) Prayer Mountain Prayer Meetings which occur twice a year. The number '3' represents 30-minute-long prayer trainings. The number '2' is a two-hour long prayer training.

I was invited twice to speak for the Chinese Christian prayer rally for the Return to True God Movement for pastors and leaders of the church in the East Bay of Northern California. Each meeting had about 50 people. After getting training from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, I conducted small groups many times using the Lection Divina prayer method to study the words of God. I also led worship-based prayer meetings in church after learning from Daniel Henderson in his seminar sponsored by Strategic Renewal Center.²¹ I also was given the opportunity to speak in a conference on prayer and the words of God.

My church was started by the Ardenwood Mission, which was established in December 3, 1995 by my mother church, Home of Christ church in Fremont, California. We rented a facility, Ardenwood School, in North Fremont and we had Sunday worship in the school stadium. The purpose of establishing the Mission by my mother church was to evangelize the community in north Fremont. This is because there are quite a few young immigrant families from China residing in that area. When this Mission started, I was hesitant to go. It was because I did not think that I was a mission pastor. However, after prayer, the Lord showed me that I should go. I followed His will by being the assistant leader of this Mission with the strong help of a retired pastor.

In the beginning, most attendees were older than 70, with only about 10 young families. The young families were new to ministry. At that time, I was still a seminary student at Western Seminary. There were about 60 people, including a few children.

²¹ For more information on Strategic Renewal Center, see <http://www.strategicrenewal.com>.

Those people were small group members coming from my mother church. We would encourage the new converts to go back to the mother church once they accepted Christ in the Mission. It just takes about 15 minutes to drive from the Mission to the mother church.

One year after launching the Mission, some leaders of the mother church were thinking of closing down the Mission due to the challenges of the ministry of the Mission, while some of them insisted on keeping the Mission. I was so perplexed that I did not know what to do. I was given the responsibility of leading this Mission.

According to my experience with the Mission for one year, I figured out that this place was a good mission field. Many non-believers came to our Mission to listen to the gospel and some were saved. There were about 10 people who received baptism in the first year. However, the negative side of this Mission was that it was hard work, and we were lacking young coworkers. People coming to help were easily burnt out and quit the ministry. I felt sad about this situation. Therefore, I prayed to God that He should show me what to do. God did answer my prayer. God told me that I needed to continue taking leadership of this Mission until there was no person staying in this Mission. I would be the last person to leave this Mission before it was closed down.

I submitted my will to Him as a result of responding to Him after prayers, and the Mission continued for almost five years, despite many challenges. Through prayer, the Mission survived and the Mission later became a church in the year 2000. In the beginning, I did not think that the Mission was ready to become a new church, even though the leaders of the mother church pressured me to let the Mission become a

church. What should I do? Again, I asked the Lord through prayer. After two months of praying, God showed me clearly that this weak Mission ministry should become a church. Then The Home of Christ Church in Ardenwood was founded on Thanksgiving weekend in 2000.

From then on the church grew. Now we have four worship services: Mandarin (100 people), Cantonese (30 people), English (35 people), and Children (35 people). Even though the four worship services are not big, we have four full-time pastoral staff and one part-time church secretary. We also have two Elders, and ten deacons. We have diverse ministries like a big church. On every Friday, we carry out a dynamic outreach ministry for the children and youth in our neighborhood community (Awana and Youth Group). The total number of this ministry reaches 100 people every Friday.

Our congregations are mixed with people speaking three different dialects: Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. Our church population has changed from the original with 20% of the congregation being age 70 and older. We have younger populations in our congregations. Roughly 60% of our congregation consists of young adults, and 20% of our congregation is middle-aged. The majority of our congregation is people from China, and others are people from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Asian countries. We also have people from the second generation called ABC (American Born Chinese). The church has grown from about 100 people to 200 people since its founding in 2000.

Through the Lord's grace, we have been able to purchase three buildings for church facilities. We bought the first building in a neighborhood city in 2004. We had the first Sunday service in the new building on June 5, 2005 after renovation. We had

the building celebration ceremony on July 23, 2005. The name of our church was changed to The Home of Christ Church in Newark after we moved to the first new building. In 2008, we purchased another church building, and we had the second building dedicated in a ceremony on May 30, 2009. In 2015, we purchased the third building for church and we had the third building dedication ceremony on April 30, 2016. Every major stage of ministry program developments and building purchases were initiated by God through our prayers, and we also kept on praying to follow His lead until we saw His blessings on those programs. Prayer has become the lifeblood of ministry of serving God in this church, and prayer has played a major role in bringing spiritual blessings to my personal growth by God.

Now the church is working on establishing a family community center to reach out to our neighbors. The purpose of this center is for the church to help the children and parents of new immigrant families in our neighborhoods grow together through workshops, trainings, and activities. The purpose of this Center is to lead them to Christ eventually.

The Vision Setting

When I pray, I love to go up to the mountain because I feel quiet and get close to God there. Sometimes I go up to the mountain that is very close to my house. When I became a full-time minister, I went up to the mountain early in the morning to pray quite often. The reason for me going up to the mountain to pray is that I feel recharged spiritually. I feel joyful, peaceful, and spiritually alert. I also have a dream that someday I

will bring my coworkers to the mountain to pray. The mountain near my house is a bare mountain. It is very convenient for people to stay there and pray.

One day before 2000, I went up to the Fasting Prayer Mountain in Scott Valley, California. It is a prayer mountain, which has small prayer rooms scattered around the mountain, and a small chapel for 50 people to worship. The surroundings of the mountain are beautiful. There are meadows, tall trees, and beautiful flowers there. The prayer mountain is owned by a Korean pastor who bought it for prayer retreat purposes. Everyone is welcome to go there to pray individually or collectively. When I saw this place, I immediately knelt down to the ground to praise God. I have been dreaming of a place like this. It is a wonderful place. From then on, I personally went up to the prayer mountain by myself alone.

Later on, I brought my church people up to the prayer mountain to pray. In 2005, I brought my church co-workers to go up to the prayer mountain to pray eight times. The drive from my church to the mountain took about one hour. The round trip took two hours of travel. We needed to stay in the prayer mountain for three hours. The whole excursion took about five hours—almost half a day. Therefore, some of the leaders complained to me that they did not feel that it is worth spending so much time to go up there.

Despite the reluctance of the other people, I insisted on bringing people up to the prayer mountain at least twice a year for the whole church. Soon the complaints from the people stopped and the murmur of reluctance was no more. It is because miracles happened. God answered our prayers. One of the strong testimonies was

delivered by my English pastor. He openly gave testimony about how God changed his attitude about prayer during his time on the prayer mountain.

The English pastor shared that he did not enjoy being led up to the prayer mountain, spending half his day up there with nothing to do but pray. But he had no choice; he had to follow the guidelines of his senior pastor. However, one time up on the prayer mountain, God spoke to him during that extended time of prayer, revealing to him that he was deeply unqualified to be a pastor. He fell short of all the requirements Paul asks of a pastor in 1 Timothy 2:1-7, except one—being the husband of one wife. That experience with God in a spacious time of prayer changed and opened his attitude. From then on, he sensed that prayer was one of the most important spiritual disciplines of a pastor!

I also encouraged my mother church leaders to go up to the prayer mountain. As a result of encouragement, we had the first united prayer mountain prayer retreat in the prayer mountain for two churches on August 19, 2006. We had about 50 people join the retreat. From then on, I also invited different church leaders to go up to the prayer mountain from time to time. I was invited to speak a short message about prayer very often in the collective meeting after we spent two hours in private with the Lord. The Lord blessed my messages and the participants were nourished spiritually almost every time. People who spent two hours in private with the Lord were refreshed and recharged spiritually when they joined the collective prayer in one hour. I heard from them the same feedback again and again from first-time prayer mountain attendees.

Why am I so excited about going up to the prayer mountain to pray? Why am I so persistently bringing people up to the prayer mountain to pray? Other than the reason of getting peace, joy, and recharged spiritually, I personally was greatly affected by the story of spiritual revival of Gospel Explosion in South Korea in 1974.

In 1974, Campus Crusade had a movement that brought about spiritual transformation in South Korea. They had about one million Christians gathering together in Seoul, South Korea for one week. The movement was led by Bill Bright, who was the founder of Campus Crusade Ministry International. They called this movement 'The Gospel Explosion'. During that week, over 300,000 Christians gathered together every evening in order to receive training on how to be witnesses for Jesus Christ. After this movement, the Christian churches in South Korea experienced a 30% growth in the next year, and this movement contributed to the boom in the Christian population in South Korea.²²

Who motivated this gospel explosion? A South Korean pastor, Dr. King, started this movement many years before 1974. Dr. King started this movement because he received a clear calling from God. Before this movement, he brought a group of ministers to go up to the mountain to pray for the spiritual revival of South Korea. During that prayer meeting at midnight, God told them to start this incredible ministry. They were convinced by the Word of God to start this movement through this Bible

²² Timothy S. Lee, *Born Again: Evangelicalism in Korea* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2010).

verse: “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.”²³

When I was in Taipei in 1990, I heard Dr. King personally speak about this experience in a rally sponsored by Campus Crusade and I was so touched by what he shared. From then on, I even had a desire to go South Korea to visit the prayer mountain over there.

In 2008, God opened the door for me so that I had a chance to go to Seoul to visit churches and their prayer mountains over there. Of the ten largest churches in the world, South Korea has seven of them. Each church emphasizes prayer ministry, and South Korea has many prayer mountains. I visited the prayer mountain of the largest church in the world. The history of the prayer mountain for that church was only 20 years old. I was so amazed that through 20 years, the church accomplished so many great things through their prayers.

After this visit, I decided to unite six brother churches together to start a prayer movement back at home. I hoped that the six brother churches could come together for a prayer rally once a year. Also, we wanted to provide a training program to help and encourage church members to pray.

On June 5, 2009, I gave a presentation in a Pastor and Elder Association meeting for this united effort in the prayer ministry. The leaders unanimously cast a yes vote to support my vision. In the meeting, God did a wonderful job of bringing six churches

²³ 1 John 5:14.

together, and the six churches agreed to go the prayer mountain for prayer once a year. Each church would take turns organizing the prayer meeting for the six churches annually.

About 90 people attended the first meeting. From 2009 to 2015, we had this united prayer meeting once a year without interruption. However, on September 17, 2016, we stopped this prayer ministry joint venture, for some leaders of the two churches found out that not too many people attended the annual prayer rally. They said that most people who attended this meeting were leaders and pastors of the church and there were not many congregation members who attended this prayer rally. They thought that we needed to stop this prayer movement for the time being.

The Holy Spirit seems to show me that now I need to stop promoting the united prayer ministry among the churches (Acts 16:6-7). However, God is still leading me to continue this prayer ministry on the mountain in a different way (Acts 16: 8-10). God wants me to build up a prayer training center in my own church. I will continue bringing members from my church to go up to the prayer mountain. At the same time, we also welcome other Christians from different churches to join us to go up to the mountain to experience spiritual transformation.

God seemed to show me this onward vision by two signs. The first one was that there was a group of new believers in my own church who were enthusiastic about going up to the prayer mountain as a result of their personal experience with spiritual transformation in the past through prayer in the prayer mountain. They took the

initiative of going up to the prayer mountain once a month. They promoted the activity and encouraged church members to go.

The second sign was that there were two pastors who joined this prayer ministry. These pastors were prominent house church leaders in Mainland China. One of them started the prayer mountain in the Wenzhou Province. I was so encouraged by these two signs. From these signs, I knew that God changed my vision of the prayer mountain movement from a united church movement to an individual church prayer movement.

I also experienced another validation of my vision from God that I was following His will in this ministry. On October 16, 2015, I led a group of 20 Christian entrepreneurs to pray on the mountain, and they all got refreshed and spiritually recharged. This group came to the States once a year from China and other countries in the Far East to promote their ministry. These people are pioneers from different professions. They are willing to share the gospel with non-believers through witnessing Christ in their workplace.

They had a very tight schedule in this trip to the States. They did not have a plan of going up to the prayer mountain for a whole day in their original schedule. However, I challenged them to spare this important moment with the Lord so that they could be refreshed and recharged in order to better serve the Lord. They prayed the night before they decided to go up to the prayer mountain. The Lord told them that they should go up to the prayer mountain. The next morning, all team members agreed to go up to the prayer mountain.

On the mountain, they experienced spiritual transformation. I gave a short message of encouragement to them on the prayer mountain when we gathered together for public prayer and worship. Each of them spent almost two hours individually to be with the Lord in solitude. This was the sign that I wanted from God to validate to me that the Lord was really leading me to carry out my vision. Since then, my church has adopted the activity of going up to the prayer mountain once a month. I have taken leadership of this prayer ministry activity.

Another confirmation from God is that He guided me to go to the D.Min. program for Spiritual Formation. I was led into this program without my preconceived thought. Originally I was trying to apply to a track for preaching, but God knew my need and directed me to this track. I am so thankful for His guidance. The training for the Spiritual Formation track enabled me to broaden my prayer ministry in terms of knowledge and practice. I am so thankful that I can learn from spiritual giants in prayer like St. Benedict and St. Francis. Their life in prayer can be a role model for me. The literature of the contemporary prayer giants like Eugene Peterson and Henri Nouwen has given me a wonderful insight into prayer ministry.²⁴

Why am I writing a research paper on the relationship between prayer mountains, prayer, and spiritual formation? The project is appealing to me because through this project I am continuing to work on my vision: developing a Prayer Center

²⁴ Eugene H Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008); Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart: Connecting with God through Prayer, Wisdom, and Silence* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1983).

for greater spiritual formation. By developing a Prayer Center, I hope to help Christians improve their prayer lives and realize the importance of prayer lives for greater spiritual formation.

The Methodology

The Prayer Center is the means of addressing the problems of how to improve prayer lives and bring us greater spiritual formation. I would like to narrowly focus on the research survey of the Prayer Center and its influence on prayer life.

The Definition of the Prayer Center

The Prayer Center is a place on the mountain where we can gather together for three hours of prayer. I have found the mountain where I can set up the Prayer Center. The mountain is a real one, which is called the Fasting Prayer Mountain of the World.²⁵ It was established by a Korean pastor Rev. Choi. She bought the mountain and developed it to become a prayer resort. It is a prayer resort for individuals and for groups as well.

There are about 20 tiny prayer cabins on the mountain. Each cabin can fit one or two persons inside. They can lock themselves up in the cabin there for prayer. They can also stay in the cabin overnight. There is also a small chapel over there. The chapel can accommodate about 50 people for group worship and prayer. There is a kitchen where

²⁵ For more information about the Fasting Prayer Mountain of the World located in Scott Valley, CA, visit <https://fpmw.us/>.

people can bring food to cook. However, people are encouraged to go there to pray with fasting and also for a prayer retreat.

The Operation of the Prayer Center

I have designated this prayer mountain to be the Prayer Center for my vision. On the prayer mountain, we will focus on prayer in solitude with God for two hours and incorporate worship in one hour. I will provide guidelines for solitude for individual prayer time and also for collective worship. When I bring people to the prayer mountain, I will provide three hours together for both individual and collective moments with God. This three-hour moment is the prayer meeting for the Prayer Center.

The Limitation of the Research

The research is focused only on the participants of the Prayer Center. It means that the research is focused only on people going to the prayer mountain to attend the prayer meeting there. The people going up to the prayer mountain are congregants of Home of Christ Church in Newark, California, USA.

We had a prayer mountain event on June 24, 2017. On that Saturday, we had a prayer meeting on the mountain from 10:00am to 1:00pm. Two hours were set for individual solitude with the Lord. One hour later was set up for collective worship and prayer as a group. There were more than 50 people who participated in this prayer meeting.

Right after the three-hour prayer meeting, I provided a survey for the participants. Each participant was asked to fill out the survey questions. The surveys have two sections. In the first section participants are asked about their spiritual formation before they joined the prayer meeting. In the second section they are asked about their spiritual formation after they joined the prayer meeting. Many people already had the experience of attending the prayer meeting more than once before. There were a few who were first-time attendees.

Through the past years, I could see that people who went up to attend the prayer mountain meeting did experience greater spiritual formation. However, I have never done a survey for those people before. Therefore I conducted a survey for this study. I provided the survey to show that there is a correlation between greater spiritual formation and their going up to the prayer mountain meeting. I also asked some people to write down their feedback of the impacts they got from the prayer mountain meetings.

The Meaning of Greater Spiritual Formation

“Greater” means improvements after prayer when the spiritual formation of the seeker is compared with his original situation before he prays, no matter in what way and how much greater it is! What is the meaning of spiritual formation? Dr. Dave Currie gives a very complete definition of spiritual formation:

Spiritual formation is *the lifelong, faith-filled process* of the Holy Spirit transforming *the whole person* into the loving likeness of Christ *to the glory of*

*the Father as informed by the whole Word of God, in relationship with the whole people of God to fulfill the whole mission of God.*²⁶

There are four Bible passages that are closely related to the definition of spiritual formation above, and one will expect it to be greater through prayers. The first passage is Ephesians 1:17-20; the second passage is Ephesians 3:14-21; the third passage is Colossians 1:8-12; and the last passage is Matthew 6:9-13. I will explore more about the meanings of these four Bible passages in the next chapter on the theological and Biblical perspective on spiritual formation.

Conclusion

My personal setting, my ministry setting, and my vision setting have shaped me to have a developing ministry for the Prayer Center for Greater Spiritual Formation. The ministry is trying to solve two problems of prayer life: to improve the prayer life and to convince people of the importance of the prayer life for greater spiritual formation.

This research project will explore the relationship between prayer and greater spiritual formation. In the next chapter, I will share Biblical perspectives of spiritual formation related to prayer, and in the third chapter, I will provide literature studies that unpack the relationship between spiritual formation and prayer. In chapter four, I will provide a research survey for exploring the relationship between spiritual formation

²⁶ Dr. Dave Currie, "Spiritual Formation" (lecture, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, May 20, 2015).

and prayer life. In the last chapter, I will provide an analysis of the survey data and interpret the data about the relationship between spiritual formation and prayer life.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

This chapter covers the Biblical and theological foundations for my thesis-project. There are strong and ample foundations in the Bible to support my argument for prayer as a foundation of spiritual formation. I have just selected a few Biblical passages and examples for exposition to substantiate my argument. Meanwhile I will provide enough secondary resources in terms of original languages, commentaries, footnotes, and works of Bible scholars to support my interpretations and viewpoints in this chapter.

Key Biblical Passages

Four Bible passages that are closely related to spiritual formation point to how prayer deepens believers' experience of God. The first passage is in the book of Ephesians:

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.¹

¹ Ephesians 1:17-20.

Through prayer, we improve our spiritual formation by knowing God better, gripping our Christian hope more firmly, desiring more strongly our heavenly inheritance, and gaining strength in our relationship with the Lord.

The second passage is also in the book of Ephesians:

For this reason, I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.²

The apostle Paul interceded for the Ephesians that their inner being be strengthened; that the love of Christ be known more deeply; and their requests be granted more than they asked. All these are graces of greater spiritual formation from God through prayer.

The third passage is in the book of Colossians:

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.³

² Ephesians 3:14-21.

³ Colossians 1:8-12.

The apostle Paul explained the purpose of prayer very clearly when he prayed for the saints at Colossae. The Christians there were being influenced by heretical teachings. False teachers were denying the deity of Christ, his coequality and coeternity with the Father.⁴ To have the sound doctrine of Jesus Christ is very important to the Colossians. To have a full knowledge of the will of God is mandatory for every Christian, and it surely leads us to a greater spiritual formation. The “will” in Greek (*thelema*) means wish, purpose, and desire (of God). In rabbinic writings the will of God, often linked with His name and rule (as in the Lord’s Prayer), is that which is to be done.⁵

The last passage is in the book of Matthew:

This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.”⁶

The prayer of the Lord brings us to the greatest extent of spiritual formation. I am going to explore more about the meanings of these four Bible passages, which are

⁴ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Love So Amazing: Expositions of Colossians 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 248.

⁵ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), s.v. “will”.

⁶ Matthew 6:9-13.

so rich that they adequately convey the essentials of spiritual formation. Now I will explore them in detail.

In the first chapter of Ephesians,⁷ the apostle Paul prayed for the saints in the church of Ephesus that they should grow spiritually through “four knows”. The first “know” (*epignosei*) is that the saints can fully know God Himself through prayer. This knowing in Greek (*epignosei*) refers not to abstract knowledge of God or objective facts about Him, but knowing Him personally and intimately. It includes an intimate awareness of God’s character and will.⁸ I believe that this kind of knowledge of God focuses not only on head knowledge, but also refers to experience. The term “knowledge,” as used here by the Apostle and in other parts of Scripture, means an intimate knowledge, according to D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones.⁹

The second “know” is that the saints know the calling of God, which means that the behavior of the saints reflects the grace of God who calls them to be holy. The third “know” is that the saints know the inheritance of God, so that Christians are not focused on building up their earthly inheritance. The fourth “know” is that the saints must recognize the power of God, through which God raised Christ from death.

⁷ Ephesians 1:15-23.

⁸ John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 620.

⁹ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God’s Ultimate Purpose: An Exposition of Ephesians 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1979), 344.

From the second to the fourth “know,” the Greek (*eidon*) is different from the first “know” (*epignosei*) and it means “to see.”¹⁰ Paul prayed for them so that they can know these truths as clearly as if they could see them. The Christians in Ephesus already knew about those four “knows” in mind and experience, but the apostle Paul prayed for them and wanted them to be refreshed in experience as well as in knowledge by the Spirit of God so that they can be uplifted. Paul personally experienced spiritual enrichment as a result of this kind of prayer to keep his faith in sufferings. He (Paul) knew (*eidon*) whom he believed.¹¹ “He knew with a settled assurance the one who was the object of his faith. This knowledge was sufficient to be absolutely convincing. The sufferings he was undergoing at present could not shake his faith in the certainty of his eternal future.”¹² From this passage, we can conclude that we are driven by prayer to know about things of God, and to know God Himself alone.

After the above prayer, Paul talked about the great plan of salvation of the triune God in chapter two and the beginning of chapter three, and then he concluded his prayer for the Ephesians in 3:14-21. His concluding prayer is focused on requesting power from the Spirit, so that their inner self could be strengthened, and their ability to understand the greatness of God’s love could be deepened. The Greek word power

¹⁰ Paul Shen, *Glimpses of Heaven: A Study on Ephesians* (Hong Kong: China Graduate School of Theology, 1994), 77.

¹¹ 2 Timothy 1:12.

¹² Homer A. Kent, Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles: Studies in 1, 2 Timothy and Titus* (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Company, 1993), 253.

(*dunamai*) is a dynamic living power through the Holy Spirit that strengthens believers.¹³

According to John Calvin, “This strengthening, he [Paul] tells us, is the work of the Spirit; so that it does not proceed from man’s own ability.”¹⁴

Lastly, Paul reminded the Ephesians again in a doxology about God’s power (*dunamai*): that He is able to accomplish beyond what we can think and ask in our requests to God. It seems to us that Paul also experienced this kind of power through prayer, when he told the Philippians that he was strengthened by God to be content in whatever circumstances God put him.¹⁵ In concluding his prayer for the Ephesians, Paul emphasized the “power” of God.

In the book of Colossians, the Apostle Paul told us very clearly that one of the strong reasons for prayer is to understand the will of God.¹⁶ He prays for the saints in the church in Colossae so that they can understand the will of God through spiritual wisdom and understanding. “The will of God in its broadest and most inclusive sense is the whole purpose of God as revealed in Christ. In this passage the term perhaps has special reference to God’s intention for the conduct of the Christian life.”¹⁷ The purpose of understanding the will of God is to please God in all walks of our daily life. What kinds

¹³John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament Edition* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 631.

¹⁴ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 261.

¹⁵ Philippians 4:12-13.

¹⁶ Colossians 1:9-12.

¹⁷ Frank E. Gaebelein, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 177.

of lives will please God? The apostle Paul said that we should bear fruit, increase our knowledge of God experientially, gain abundant strength in our walks with the Lord, and give thanks to God all the time.

No other purpose in prayer is more important than fulfilling the will of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ also stressed the importance of this truth: “I have come to do your will, my God.”¹⁸ Jesus also said that He can do nothing by Himself, but He can do only what He sees the Father doing.¹⁹ The prayer life of Jesus reveals the will of God and the power of God to accomplish it. Spiritual formation should be strongly expressed in the fulfillment of the will of God.

In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus laid down a format for us to follow in prayer. At first, who is the person to whom we should pray? Jesus said that it is the Heavenly Father. Of course, we can pray to Jesus Christ and to the Holy Spirit theologically. However, Jesus mentioned to us that we have to focus on our Heavenly Father. Prayer is a relationship with God. The relationship has many dimensions. However, Jesus wants us to focus on the dimension of the relationship between father and son.

Jesus describes that the relationship between father and son is a loving relationship. The “Father” in Greek (*Pater*) conveys the meaning of a personal father instead of a “national father” when Jesus teaches us in prayer. The personal relationship between a father and son is very intimate. John MacArthur says,

¹⁸ Hebrews 10:7.

¹⁹ John 5:19.

The Old Testament Jew, the saint of God in the Old Testament, understood something of the fatherhood of God. There's no question about that. He understood that God was the Father. I think they understood it more in a national sense than they did in a personal sense. I think they understood it more in terms of God's sort of overall care of the nation Israel than they ever understood the intimacy of a relationship with God as a personal Father.²⁰

He knows our needs before we ask him. In the story of the prodigal son, Jesus also describes that the love of the Heavenly Father for us is an unconditional love.²¹ Moreover, Jesus tells us that the Heavenly Father will give the best to His child who seeks Him.²² The Heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. The Holy Spirit will guide us, fill us, empower us, and sanctify us for our best interest.

In the Lord's Prayer, we are given the guidelines for the prayer content. Jesus laid out six things we need to pray for in two groups. The needs of the first group are about God: sanctify the name of God, ask His kingdom to come, and let His will be done on earth as in Heaven. The needs of the second group are about us: give us our daily bread, forgive our sins, and rescue us from the evil one (Satan).

However, the focus of these two groups together leads us to our Heavenly Father. The second group seems for our needs only. In reality, Jesus teaches us to realize that God is loving and powerful, and provides when we pray for our needs to be fulfilled. That is why the conclusion of prayer follows as such: "...for yours are the

²⁰ John MacArthur, "The Paternity of Prayer," *Grace to You*, November 18, 1979, Accessed October 4, 2018, <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/2234/>.

²¹ Luke 15:11-32.

²² Luke 11:11; Matthew 7:9-11.

kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.”²³ Even though the earliest manuscripts do not have those words, they sum up the meaning of the purpose of the Lord’s Prayer. Alexander Maclaren says, “No doubt this doxology is appropriate as a conclusion, and serves to give an aspect of completeness.”²⁴ Therefore, no matter what we pray for, we should be led to God’s purpose.

The Lord’s Prayer brings us spiritual formation in its teachings already. The privacy (go to your inner chamber, and shut the door), the directness (pray to your Father), the simplicity (no vain repetition), and the true order of prayer (put God first) already can point us in the right direction of spiritual formation. Above all, the combination of collectivism and individualism in the Lord’s Prayer is cause for us to make remarkable progress in our prayer life. According to Campbell Morgan, this is prayer according to Jesus:

Notice the pronoun of the prayer (in the Lord’s Prayer), the pronouns in the first person; “Ours—us—our—us—our—we—our—us—us.” There is not a pronoun in the first singular person. They are all plural. We cannot pray that prayer alone. There is no room for selfishness there.... The only right we have to be the subject of the sentence is the right to forgive the man who has wronged us.... That is Christ’s socialism. It is based upon strong individualism; –individually, a man alone with God (in the inner chamber); socially—the world on the heart, as the prayer is offered. If we learn to pray this way, a great deal of praying will cease, and a great deal of praying will begin.²⁵

²³ Matthew 6:13b.

²⁴ Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scriptures: Mathew 1-8* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1974), 290.

²⁵ G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1929), 61-62.

In conclusion, I found out that the focus of prayer in the Lord's Prayer is almost the same as what Paul teaches the Ephesians and Colossians. Paul does really understand and follows what Jesus said about prayer. The focus of the Lord's Prayer is to honor God (His will, kingdom, power, forgiveness, providence, and glory). It is exactly like what Andrew Murray said, "The glory of the Father must be the aim and end, the very soul and life of our prayer."²⁶

Key Theological Perspectives

Prayer is a spiritual discipline that has rich theological implications. Through prayer, we can see the operation of the triune God: The Holy Father, the Holy Son, and the Holy Spirit through the Holy Scriptures. When we pray to the Father, we are motivated by the Spirit through the merit of the Son. Through prayer, the Father grants us the Spirit, who reveals the will of God through the Bible and empowers us to do His work so that we can glorify the Son and the Father.

Without the Spirit of God, we cannot discern the things of God,²⁷ and the will of God.²⁸ Only through the Spirit of God can we understand the deep things of God and His will. Without Christ, we cannot understand the Father²⁹ and the fullness of the Father.³⁰

²⁶ Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayers* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1981), 106.

²⁷ 1 Corinthians 2:10-11.

²⁸ Romans 8:27-28.

²⁹ 1 John 1:23.

Through the prayer relationship between us and the triune God, and from the examples we discussed in the first section of four key Bible passages, we can make a very clear conclusion: Prayer is the channel through which we come to know God. Prayer is primarily not about us and our needs.

As a result of prayer, we will be shaped into the character of Christ through the transformation of our thoughts, feelings, desires, and bodies, as Dallas Willard described in his book, *Renovation of the Heart*.³¹ It is a gradual process of spiritual transformation from inside out. Our minds will not be shaken when we face any challenges because of what Paul told us, “If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”³² Our feelings are molded with the fruits of Spirit like love, joy, and peace when we walk with the Spirit through prayer. Our hearts will be trained to follow the will of God, like the way Christ prayed in Gethsemane, “Yet not as I will, but as you will.”³³ Our body will be treated as a shrine to the Holy Spirit to glorify God.³⁴

We do not only see the wonderful and loving relationship of the triune God in the practice of our prayer to God, but we also enjoy communion with God and expand

³⁰ Colossians 1:9.

³¹ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Carol Stream, IL: NavPress, 2012).

³² Romans 8:31-32.

³³ Matthew 26:39.

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

our communion from God towards others. A person who loves to pray and spends time in prayer will easily build up a good relationship with other people. For God is love, and we are filled with His love when we pray. Dallas Willard says:

Community is formed not by mere love and requited love, which by itself is exclusive, but by *shared* love for another, which is inclusive. And within the Trinity there is, I believe, not even a thought of “First, Second, and Third.” There is no subordination within the Trinity, not because of some profound metaphysical fact, but because the members of the Trinity will not have it.³⁵

Therefore, we can conclude that prayer is a relationship builder. The more we pray, the better community we will have. A church that spends more time in prayer normally has a better community for church members and the neighborhood.

Since prayer is about God and things of God, we can experience spiritual transformation when we pray to God by focusing on Him and the things of Him. God will transform us through Himself. God knows our needs, and He loves us. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Triune God, plays a vital role in transformation through prayer.

According to James Houston:

The Holy Spirit is the person who makes the presence of God a living experience. He comforts us when we feel forsaken or when we are in mourning. He enters into our most personal temptations, strengthening us to resist them. There are many times when we are not sure if God has really heard our prayers, or whether he really understands our circumstances. At such times we can experience the consoling role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. In all these ways, we discover that the Spirit living in us is an active Spirit, making real to us the presence of God. Paul explained this truth clearly in Romans 8:26-28.³⁶

³⁵ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 184.

³⁶ James M. Houston, *The Prayer: Deepening Your Friendship With God* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 2007), 149.

Through His will, His power, His love, His forgiveness, His providence, and His character, God will transform us as individuals and as groups. The areas of transformation are multiple and dynamic. The areas of transformation cover from weakness to strength, from sorrow to joy, from uncleanness to holiness, from doubt to trust, from failure to success, from hatred to love, from self-centeredness to self-sacrifice. All spiritual transformations will have a strong impact on all kinds of ministry such as discipleship, and fellowship, worship, and service. I am going to give some examples of how spiritual formation as a result of prayer impacts individuals, groups, churches, nations, and the world in next section of this chapter.

Examples of Spiritual Formation

Joshua prayed to God from morning until the evening,³⁷ and then God revealed to him that the reason for the failure of the military operation in the city of Ai was due to the sin of Achan. Through this prayer, he found a solution to the problem, and then he was able to continue to lead his army to victory. On the contrary, when Joshua and his followers did not pray to God or ask for His advice, he was deceived by his Gibeonite enemy, consequently putting the Israelites in a disadvantageous situation.³⁸

Gideon was transformed from a timid person to a mighty soldier for the Lord. He led 300 people to defeat an enemy of 135,000 people. Gideon became a brave leader

³⁷ Joshua 7:6.

³⁸ Joshua 9:14.

through answered prayers. He prayed for assurance that the angel who spoke to him was coming from the Lord.³⁹ He also prayed for assurance that the Lord was really using him to deliver the Israelites from the Midianite armies.⁴⁰

Both prayers from Gideon were answered “yes” by the Lord. Therefore, Gideon became a bold soldier for the Lord, and he led the Israelites in a decisive victory against the enemy. Gideon was completely transformed from a timid person to a brave general.

David was a man of prayer. His prayer life led him to have a fruitful life. His spirit, soul, and body were joyful and rested because of his constant connection with God through prayer.⁴¹ He became an optimistic leader for his country because he had a close relationship with God through prayer.

His victory over the Amalekites, who captured his family members and all of his followers’ family members, was due to his prayer to God.⁴² The sadness and disappointment from his followers were turned to joy because of prayer. Amid the difficulties of life, it is so blessed to rest in the joy of all God is in Himself⁴³ due to prayer. He had a wonderful spiritual transformation because of answered prayers from God.

³⁹ Judges 6:17-24.

⁴⁰ Judges 6:36-7:1.

⁴¹ Psalm 16:8-11.

⁴² 1 Samuel 30:6-8.

⁴³ Hebert Lockyer, *All the Prayers of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959), 67.

Elijah prayed for fire to descend from Heaven to consume the sacrifice on the altar of Mount Carmel, and God answered his prayer. The fire came down from Heaven to consume the sacrifice and the water. Elijah experienced spiritual transformation in the Israelite community. The people then recognized that Jehovah is God – not Baal.

Daniel prayed to God with his three friends in a small group and they experienced a spiritual transformation.⁴⁴ Their mood turned from depression to joyful celebration. It was because the King Nebuchadnezzar wanted to kill all the wise men, including them, because they were not able to interpret the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, who completely forgot his dream. However, God revealed the dream and its meaning to Daniel through the prayer of the small group.

Therefore, prayer in a small group can bring spiritual transformation to the people who pray. Their answered prayers also influenced an unbeliever like Nebuchadnezzar, causing him to experience a spiritual transformation. The king, who was an idol-worshipping pagan, turned to honor God because Daniel's interpretation of his dreams was fulfilled.⁴⁵

In the book of Isaiah, God told the nation of Israel that through prayer, God could make them walk with energy, run with vigor, and fly with strength like an eagle. They could be restored from their tiredness and loss of direction. The whole nation could become invigorated again.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Daniel 2:12-23.

⁴⁵ Daniel 2: 46-47.

⁴⁶ Isaiah 40:27-31.

The Jerusalem community experienced transformation through prayers day and night as God promised them that they would be revived someday.⁴⁷ The Ninevites also experienced transformation when they repented and prayed to God for mercy after they heard the message from the prophet Jonah.⁴⁸

Jesus fasted and prayed when He was tempted in the wilderness; He triumphed over the temptations and was full of the power of the Spirit when he returned to Galilee.⁴⁹ Before he began his work, Jesus prayed early in the morning. Then He was full of power in His ministry.⁵⁰

When Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, He really experienced the transformation of His spirit. Jesus struggled with His fear of facing the cross. Yet after prayer, He became more prepared to face the challenge.⁵¹ He was calm, brave, and kind as He faced the cross. He even prayed for his persecutors and saved one of the robbers on the cross. His power and spiritual transformation came from His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.⁵² The Bible tells us that Jesus was really praying in an agony in Gethsemane: "And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground."⁵³ Eugene Peterson made a comment on the

⁴⁷ Isaiah 61:4-62:7.

⁴⁸ John 3:5-10.

⁴⁹ Luke 4:14.

⁵⁰ Mark 1:35-39.

⁵¹ John 18:6.

⁵² Luke 22:43-44.

prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane: “The agony of the cross would not have been possible without the agony of this prayer.”⁵⁴

The apostle Peter prayed on the roof of a house, and he experienced a vision, which would lead him to be transformed in his mindset to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.⁵⁵ Paul also experienced a transformation of being submissive to the will of God to live with his thorn after praying three times to God to remove it.⁵⁶

The early church experienced phenomenal spiritual transformation because they prayed together. Through prayers for ten days, the disciples of 120 people experienced the descending of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and they fearlessly preached the words of God.⁵⁷

The church also prayed together after the apostles Peter and John were released from prison for preaching the gospel. After prayer, they all experienced spiritual transformation because they were filled with the Holy Spirit. The apostles were encouraged to be bold and preach the words of God again.⁵⁸

The church of Antioch experienced a great spiritual transformation through the prayers of its leaders. Barnabas led a group of five people to fast and pray together.

⁵³ Luke 22:44.

⁵⁴ Eugene H. Peterson, *Tell It Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 237.

⁵⁵ Acts 10:9.

⁵⁶ 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

⁵⁷ Acts 2:1-4, 14.

⁵⁸ Acts 4:23-31.

They experienced the calling of the Holy Spirit, who separated Barnabas and Paul to do missions in faraway lands.⁵⁹ The gospel was then preached from Judea and Samaria to the end of the world. This spiritual transformation of their mindsets, which led to the expansion of the gospel, would have never occurred without the Spirit and their prayers.

Starting from Acts 13 through 28, we can tell the gospel was moving dynamically from Asia Minor to Europe and throughout the world. At that time, the end of the world was Spain. Paul intended to go there to preach gospel.⁶⁰

Prayers on the Mountain

The Bible, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, describes how wonderful spiritual transformations happened after people pray in the mountains. In the Old Testament, Moses spent 40 days and nights with the Lord on Mount Sinai. He fasted and prayed. He communicated with the Lord and was instructed to build a sanctuary and tabernacle in the wilderness so that people could worship God.⁶¹

Moses also spent another 40 days and nights fasting and praying to beg forgiveness from God for the sin of his people, for the Israelites worshipped a golden calf when they were impatient for Moses to return from Mount Sinai. Their rebellion

⁵⁹ Acts 13:1-4.

⁶⁰ Rom. 15:23-24.

⁶¹ Exodus 24:18.

against God in worshipping the golden calf made the Lord very angry with them. God wanted to destroy the whole country but Moses interceded for them on Mount Sinai.⁶²

These two important prayers from Moses to God on Mount Sinai had brought spiritual transformation for the whole country. Israel would later become a nation with the Ten Commandments and new laws, a nation distinguishable from her neighboring nations and even from all the other countries in the world. Israel had her own identity, laws, and God.

After finishing 40 years of wandering with his people in the wilderness, Moses still reminded them of his experience of praying to God on Mount Sinai for them twice.⁶³ The purpose of reminding them is that Moses wanted his people to keep obeying the laws of God and worshipping Him alone once they entered the new land of Canaan. In other words, Moses wanted the spiritual transformation of his people to keep on going after 40 years.

Moreover, the book of Psalms has tremendous examples of spiritual formation through prayer. Psalm 51 is a repentant Psalm of David after he confessed his sin of adultery. It is a Psalm of inner purification. Psalm 119 is a psalm of praying the words of God which will enlighten the whole being of a saint. Psalm 139 is a psalm of understanding the nature of God: all-knowing, all-presence, and all-strength. This psalm brings us a sense of awesome feeling before God. Psalm 23 is a psalm of the abundant

⁶² Exodus 32:30; 34:28.

⁶³ Deuteronomy 9:9, 18; 10:10.

grace, guidance, protection, and blessings on each life of the individual saint. They all express greater spiritual formation through prayer.

The Psalms of Ascent underline how the physical process of going up a mountain reflects the spiritual process of drawing closer to the God of heaven. The mountain of the Lord is Mount Zion where Jerusalem is located, his holy place is where his temple is.⁶⁴ Psalms of Ascent have a symbolic meaning of spiritual ascending. When the Israelites went upward to the temple in Jerusalem to worship God, they sang Psalms of Ascent. There are fifteen Psalms (Psalms 120-134) called Psalms of Ascent. The pilgrims would go up to Jerusalem three times a year for the festivals of Passover, Tabernacle, and Pentecost to worship God.

Jerusalem was built on the mountaintop of Zion which was surrounded by lower hills. And the temple was built on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem. When the people of God went to the temple, they started climbing up to Mt. Zion, and then finally reached the temple. As they went up, it is believed that they sang the fifteen psalms described as the Psalms of Ascent.

The words of the songs are full of spiritual meaning. They are rich in spiritual formation to the pilgrims. The contents of the psalms cover crying out to God (Psalm 120; Psalm 130), praising Him (Psalm 134), trusting Him (Psalm 121-125), blessings from Him (Psalm 128), joy in Him (Psalm 126), and community worship (Psalm 122; Psalm 133). When we have a prayer moment in the Prayer Center meeting, we are

⁶⁴ Psalm 24:3.

experiencing something similar to singing of the Psalms of Accent for the purpose of reaping spiritual formation.

In the New Testament, Jesus once brought three disciples up to the mountain. They prayed together in a small group. During the prayer meeting, the disciples saw the transfiguration of Jesus.⁶⁵ Through this transfiguration, Jesus showed the glory of His kingdom to His disciples and encouraged them to take up the cross to follow Him.⁶⁶

This vision of Jesus brought about the spiritual transformation of the three disciples: Peter, John, and James. Their faith had been strengthened and they would be willing to take the cross to follow Christ. They had a great spiritual impact on the early churches. Peter, when he was to about to leave this world, even reminded the young Christians about the reality of the second coming of the Christ by referring to this transfiguration experience.⁶⁷ The impact of this spiritual transformation not only endured for 30 years for Peter, but its impact keeps on lasting for the coming days until the Lord shall come. This apostolic witness and testimony has become the base for Christians who endure persecutions and martyrdom.⁶⁸

The psalmist says, “Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in His holy place?”⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Matthew 16:28-17:8.

⁶⁶ Matthew 16:24-27.

⁶⁷ 2 Peter 1:16-18.

⁶⁸ D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Expository Sermons on 2 Peter* (London: First Banner of Truth, 1983), 90.

⁶⁹ Psalm 24:3.

It seems to me that the mountain symbolizes “an inner room (or chamber)”⁷⁰ where we can meet God and pray to Him. “An inner room” represents a place where a person can close the door and pray to the Father in secrecy. Then the Father will reward you.⁷¹ The “inner room” or “closet” in Greek (*tameion*) means one’s private chamber where he can withdraw from the world and shut the world out and commune with God.⁷² It is also a secret room where someone can find solitude and silence. Solitude and silence can never be separated from prayer. Henri Nouwen says, “The Desert Fathers did not think of solitude as being alone, but as being alone with God. They did not think of silence as not speaking, but as listening to God, Solitude and silence are the context within which prayer is practiced.”⁷³ When we pray in secrecy, the reward is overwhelming. Jesus brought three disciples to the mountain to pray in secrecy, and the transfiguration happened for them.⁷⁴ The transfiguration of Jesus became an overwhelming spiritual formation to Peter.

Saint Benedict became a hermit. He spent many unrecorded hours praying for others, fasting, and communing with God. He also used his time of solitude to fight the

⁷⁰ Matthew 6:6, NASB.

⁷¹ Matthew 6:6.

⁷² Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1930), 51.

⁷³ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart* (Ballantine Books, 1981), 63.

⁷⁴ Mark 9:2.

body's cravings.⁷⁵ As a result of his prayer in solitude, his spiritual formation and his spiritual influence to others is beyond which words can describe.

When we fast and pray, the reward can be incredible.⁷⁶ Rewards for fasting and prayer can only come about from having a righteous life. In the context of Isaiah 58:6-9, the Lord rebuked the Israelites after they fasted and got no reward from the Lord, for they did not have a life of righteousness. The Israelites fasted and prayed in vain. God promises us that the righteous will reap greater spiritual formation when we follow His principle of fasting and prayer.

Jesus encouraged the disciples to fast and pray for strong faith to cast out the devil when they encountered great challenge. He said to them, "However, this kind [devil] goes not out but by prayer and fasting."⁷⁷ When Moses fasted and prayed in secrecy for 40 days and nights, he received the words of God which would transform the nation. Richard Foster mentions the benefit of fasting to Christians in his book, *Celebration of Discipline*. He gives an example of Britain in 1756, when the people in England experienced spiritual revival when the king of Britain called for a day of solemn prayer and fasting because of a threatened invasion by the French.⁷⁸ John Wesley

⁷⁵ Carmen Acevedo Dutcher, *A life of St. Benedict: Man of Blessings* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2006), 58.

⁷⁶ Isaiah 58:6-9.

⁷⁷ Matthew 17:21, KJV.

⁷⁸ Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 44.

recorded this day of fasting and prayer in his Journal on February 6: “The fast day was a glorious day, such as London has scarce seen since the Restoration. Humility was turned into national rejoicing for the threatened invasion by the French was averted.”⁷⁹

Personally I feel that the Prayer Center meeting, which takes place on the mountain does provide “an inner room” environment. When we fast and pray in secrecy in the prayer meeting, we will definitely get the benefit of greater spiritual formation.

Conclusion

We can conclude in this chapter that spiritual formation due to prayer provides a strong motivation in our prayer life from a Biblical perspective. Since prayer is all about God and honoring God, God will draw us to get close to him after we get close (pray) to Him.⁸⁰ Paul is a man of praying without ceasing; our Lord is also a servant of God praying without ceasing.⁸¹ Their prayer life was carried out continuously on earth as a result of being energized by the spiritual formation they derived from prayer. The environment of prayer (like praying on the mountain) is important because it provides an inner room atmosphere so that we can concentrate on prayer. In the next chapter, I am going to provide literature reviews to show what Christians say about spiritual formation through prayer.

⁷⁹ John Wesley, *The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley* (London: The Epworth Press, 1938), 147.

⁸⁰ James 4:8a.

⁸¹ 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Luke 18:1.

CHAPTER THREE

SELECTED LITERATURE REVIEWS

In this chapter, I am going to review writings of Christians who tell us about the strong relationship between prayer and spiritual formation. Each Christian writer was picked for a specific area of prayer life, and they are experts in that area they are talking about.

The following books will cover four areas in prayer life. The first area is a procedure of prayer in a prayer meeting called ACTS, which is adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplications. The second area is the words of God and the Spirit of God in prayer. The third area is the theology of prayer, and the fourth area is role models of prayer.

I will share about how these books can deepen a Christian's understanding of those four areas in the Prayer Center meeting. I can say that all four of these areas lead to spiritual formation through the process of prayer. If the process continues, the result of spiritual formation in the Prayer Center will be fruitful. I will give comments on some portions of each book, which will be helpful to the members of the Prayer Center.

The Procedure of Prayer in the Prayer Center Meeting

Transforming Prayer: How Everything Changes When You Seek God's Face —
Daniel Henderson

This book deals with common barriers to praying effectively. It also teaches Christians about prayer life in simple and biblical patterns of prayer. Christians will enjoy prayer life in private moments and in public prayer meetings as well. The author, Daniel Henderson, illustrates his method of praying by using the example of the Lord's Prayer. It is a worship-based prayer technique, instead of a need-based prayer technique. We worship God first and then pray to God for our needs later. When we pray, we pray with the words of God. It is an old method but freshly re-discovered.

What the author has figured out about prayer is amazing. This method is exactly what Paul teaches us about worship and prayer by being filled with the Spirit and the words of God. The first Bible passage, Ephesians 5:18-19, tells us, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord." The second Bible verse, Colossians 3:16, tells us, "Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts." The direction of worship is the same after being filled with the Holy Spirit, and being filled with the words of God in these two respective Bible quotations.

The author says that we can use this format to bring change to our prayer life in our church prayer meetings, as well as to bring change in our personal prayer life.

Through continual practice, this method will help us and the church to experience spiritual formation.

Application Emphasis (Adoration)

We will use the worship-based prayer technique in the Prayer Center meeting both in solitary moments and collective prayer. This method will be a great help to the leaders and attendees of the Prayer Center meeting to experience spirit-flow, joyful, and pleasant prayer moments in the meeting.

The book is directing us to focus first on God, both on His character and kingdom, instead of on our own needs. We worship Him and praise Him and put Him first. This prayer priority will uplift our spirits, and as a result God will transform us to be Christ-like through the Spirit of God and the words of God in prayer. We will also enjoy praying very much with this method. This is the reason why I chose this book for application in our prayer life.

The Transforming Power of Fasting and Prayer — Bill Bright

This inspiring book encourages us to fast and pray. The book's author tells us his personal account of spiritual renewal from fasting for 40 days, and he provides a guideline for how to do fasting and prayer. The far-reaching impact of fasting and prayer on individuals, churches, cities, and nations is illustrated for encouragement. The relationship between fasting and the Great Commission is emphasized. Fasting and prayer will bring great spiritual formation similar to the people in the city of Nineveh as

recorded in Jonah 3:10, and the mission will be expanded if the leaders of the church fast and pray as in Acts 13:1-3.

Application Emphasis (Confession)

Through fasting, everyone is encouraged to examine their internal world and external behavior. We will confess sins, repent from our wrongdoings, and get purified by the blood of Christ during the Prayer Center meeting.

Sin becomes a powerful blockage which prevents us from knowing God's will and His power in the Christian life. Prayer through fasting is a vital channel for us to examine our motives deeply and purify our souls through our confession and His forgiveness so that we can get close to God face to face. As a result, we know Him better and get more blessings from Him. This is the reason why I chose this book for confession in prayer.

Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology —
Eugene H. Peterson

This is a book that helps people understand the meaning of spiritual formation. "Spiritual theology" is the main point that Eugene H. Peterson is trying to emphasize. Spiritual theology means living out a life that reflects the knowledge of God, and thus will glorify God. The relationship between the knowledge of God and living out this knowledge needs to be balanced, according to the author. The second important point he mentions about our triune God is that He is also "personal" and "relational." This

important truth emphasizes the effect spirituality can have on our relationships with other people. This approach to spirituality is very practical and accessible.

Eugene Peterson is a great writer who offers deep insight in delivering the meaning of spiritual formation through scriptural expositions of both Old and New Testaments. God breathes life into all the creation in Genesis chapters one and two, and Peterson echoes the same breath in the apostle John's gospel when the apostle describes the seven miracles of Jesus. He defines spirituality as coming from the Spirit of God, who is alive. The Holy Spirit is involved in creation, in salvation, and in community with blessings. What a breakthrough this is to our understanding of the meaning of spirituality.

Through His creation we can sense the beauty and glory of God. All the things in the material world God created are good, including our daily life, job, place, and people. We can enjoy all material things and we should give glory to God for that through praise and prayer.

Proverbs 8:31 tells us Jesus himself enjoyed the place God created for man: "...rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind." People often misquote this verse saying that "wisdom" here, in the context of chapter eight, is the person of Jesus. In fact, wisdom in this chapter is personified as a craftsman of God, assisting God in creating the world. The real meaning of verse 31 is that the wisdom of God—as personified as a craftsman—enjoyed the place God created for man. However, we are also aware that Jesus also loves the place He himself created for man. In addition, the

Trinity loves the place created for mankind. God sent Jesus to the world so that he can be with us. His name is called Immanuel.¹

Jesus also enjoyed life, having a good time with people during celebrations when He was on earth. If the writer can emphasize the application of spirituality in creation in our daily life, the application will turn our routine daily life into a joyful and spiritual life. We are misled conceptually if we think that we are in a dichotomous world: spiritual and material. The separation of spiritual and material in terms of importance is wrong, since God's Spirit was incorporated into matter when He created the world. When God created the material world, He described his creation as good.

Peterson gives us advice to have a contrite spirit and fearful attitude before the Lord if we want to have a keen spiritual formation through creation. Our contrite spirit and fearful attitude will bring us a humble, thankful, and reverent attitude towards all of creation.

In the second section of the book, "Christ Plays in History," Peterson points out that the death of Christ brings salvation to us, which leads us toward the breathing of spirituality in our daily life. We need His saving grace daily to protect us. He applies two concepts: the ascetic of salvation and the aesthetic of salvation through Mark 8:27-9:9.

The ascetic aspect of salvation is self-denial (the cross) and the aesthetic aspect of salvation is God-exalting (resurrection). These two concepts are astounding to us in that the writer can wrap up the significance Christ's death in one word: sacrifice. The

¹ Matthew 1:23.

focal event of Jesus' work of salvation is sacrifice.² Through sacrifice such as self-denial and obedience to Christ, we can experience the beauty of salvation in our daily life. The beauty of salvation is the glory of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ like what Peter, James, and John saw in His transfiguration on the mountain. We can see the beauty of His salvation only through submission to His will.

Personally, I believe that the use of the transfiguration event by Peterson to illustrate his point is not very appropriate. The order is not right. First the disciples enjoyed the aesthetic aspect of the salvation, then they were required to go through the ascetic aspect of the salvation. The teaching of the Bible is in reverse order. We have to deny ourselves first, and then we will experience abundant life. However, his concept of salvation is great because he uses these two terms to explain the process of greater spiritual formation.

Salvation is a big term. It covers not only a person spiritually but also a nation like Israel physically. The whole nation of Israel was rescued by God from the slavery of Egypt and settled down in Canaan as a new nation. Above all, it covers the salvation of each individual in our daily life. We need salvation not only for our eternity, but for salvation in our daily lives.

The third section of the book, "Christ Plays in Community," is an amazing discovery for spirituality. The Holy Spirit, who raised Christ from death and came down to earth after Christ's ascension, just as Christ promised, has formed the disciples and all

² Eugene H. Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 218.

subsequent believers into a fresh, dynamic, and spiritual community. The Spirit permeates this community through the prayers of believers. The early church testifies to the spiritual vitality of this community. After the resurrection of Christ, communion and baptism stimulates a strong spiritual community among the disciples.

Above all, the love of Christ through the Spirit among the disciples shows spirituality to the world so that the world will know that we are His disciples. A Christian cannot live alone, since God desires us to live in community. Without community, the spirituality of Christians is incomplete. Praying in community always results in greater spiritual formation, according to the Bible.³

Application Emphasis (Thanksgiving)

Our thanksgiving in the prayer moments in the Prayer Center meeting will be focused on the knowledge of God, God's creation, Christ's salvation, and new community resulting from Christ's resurrection. We will focus on what Christ has accomplished for us in our thanksgivings. This focus will bring us full confidence in God's love and His power, just as Jesus told us in the Lord's Prayer. God already knows what we need before we ask.⁴

Thanksgiving plays a vital part in our prayer life. We need to give thanks for everything, according to the teachings of the Bible.⁵ We need to give thanks to God in

³ Acts 4:31.

⁴ Matthew 6:8.

⁵ 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

Himself, His creation, and salvation. Thanksgiving also covers the events happening in daily life and the people we know and meet. This book is appropriate and was selected to provide this concept of the thanksgiving area of prayer life.

The Prayer: Deepening your Friendship with God — James M. Houston

This is a wonderful book about prayer. Dr. Houston focuses on the friendship or relationship with God to develop the theology of prayer. This is his personal experience of breaking through in his prayer life. The church father Clement of Alexandria gave him insight about prayer: Prayer keeps company with God.

Houston develops his points by looking at the teachings of the triune God related to prayers in the Bible. The Holy Spirit teaches us how to pray in our heart. The Son, Jesus Christ, sets up a model of prayer for us to follow on Earth. The Holy Father deals with us through a father-son relationship in prayers. He also mentions the prayers of the saints like the Apostle Paul and group prayers in the Bible. They teach us how to pray by their examples.

He approaches prayer through “relationship,” and it is wonderful. Believers are “relationship” creatures. We have relationships with God, with nature, with people, with work, with all the good and bad things happening to us, and even with ourselves. All these things around us are known to God, and He cares about everything concerning our relationships. Therefore, we can pray and reflect on all those relationships, and by doing this, our prayer life is more meaningful to God and to us. We can relate all the things in our lives to God, and this relationship generates the motivation to pray.

The relationship concept will help us focus on God and others instead of self. The concept of relationship and community will help us develop spiritual formation in the area of loving others and loving God.

Application Emphasis (Supplications)

We will apply the community concept with our fellow Christians in prayer. We will support many fellow Christians in our church as well as outside of our church and their prayer requests in the Prayer Center meeting.

Prayer is a relationship between God and man. A relationship to God is love. God also encourages us to love other people. Therefore, supplication in prayer is a love for other people. Houston clearly defines this truth in his book. We love because God loves us. Deepening the relationship with God will bring us a deeper love for others in our prayer life. This is the reason I chose this book for the area of supplication in prayer.

The Word of God and the Spirit of God in Prayer

Praying the Word: An Introduction to Lectio Divina — Enzo Bianchi

This is an introduction to Lectio Divina, but I found that the writer grasps the main point and reaches the heart of this spiritual discipline. He explains the meaning of “contemplation” which is “seeing everything and everyone through God’s eyes.”⁶ This definition can help us better understand contemplation when we practice Lectio Divina.

⁶ Enzo Bianchi, *Praying the Word: An Introduction to Lectio Divina* (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 1998), 79.

Bianchi also illustrated that the calling of the Holy Spirit comes when we study the Word of God with the stories of the Ethiopian and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Without Philip, the Ethiopian would not have understood what he was reading, and without the help of Christ, the two disciples would not have experienced the feelings of warmth and fervency in their hearts when they listened to the words of God.

Enzo Bianchi concludes that without the Spirit, we have nothing to gain by just doing Lectio Divina. We are taught to have full confidence in the Spirit to help us in this exercise and then we can reap the benefit of spiritual formation.

Application Emphasis (The Word of God)

Enzo Bianchi explains how the Word of God and the Holy Spirit interact to aid spiritual formation when we practice Lectio Divina. When we study the Word of God and contemplate His words, the Holy Spirit will illuminate our heart to see truth. We will really experience what Paul said: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”⁷ The practice of Lectio Divina is highly encouraged in the Prayer Center meeting when we sit alone in the cabin for two hours.

⁷ 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

This practical guidebook teaches us how to do Lectio Divina individually as well as collectively. By selecting a Biblical passage, we do Lectio Divina together in a small group. It will help us grow together spiritually in the knowledge of God, being inspired by His words through the sharing of other group members. Paul emphasizes that we need to come together to understand the depth and breadth of God's love.⁸ We need to do Lectio Divina both individually as well as in a group if we want to have spiritual formation through praying in the Word of God.

Application Emphasis (The Word of God)

Richard Peace provides instruction in doing Lectio Divina in a small group. The participants of the Prayer Center meeting will be encouraged occasionally to have Lectio Divina in small groups. The practice of Lectio Divina in a small group leads to the enrichment of spiritual understanding and encouragement to each group member by their sharing together, as Paul told the Ephesian Christians, "...together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ."⁹ This book is chosen because it is simple and practical for us to follow for the group to do Lectio Divina.

⁸ Ephesians 3:18.

⁹ Ephesians 3:18.

With Christ in the School of Prayer — Andrew Murray

Andrew Murray explains the role of the Holy Spirit in prayer very well in his book. From his point of view, the Holy Spirit helps us start a new epoch in the prayer world. He says,

The Holy Spirit descending from Christ to us draws us up into the great stream of His ascending prayers.... Through the Spirit, Christ's prayers become ours, and ours are made His.... This [Holy] Spirit cannot simply be the Spirit of our hours of prayers. It must be the Spirit of our whole life and walk, glorifying Jesus in us by revealing the completion of His work and making us wholly one with Him and like Him.¹⁰

Murray helps us to trust in the Spirit more in prayer so that spiritual formation can be easily accessible.

Application Emphasis (The Spirit of God)

The author clearly explains the role the Holy Spirit plays in the prayer life of Christ. The participants of the Prayer Center meeting will be taught to follow the footsteps of Christ to be submissive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our prayer life.

The Theology of Prayer

Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home — Richard Foster

This book comprehensively deals with the theology and practice of prayer. The author, Richard Foster, views the perspective of the subject matter from the three

¹⁰ Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1981), 188.

persons of the Trinity: God the Son, God the Father, and God the Spirit. When we pray, we look inwards to our Lord, upwards to our Heavenly Father, and outwards to the Holy Spirit. He is not trying to separate the three persons of God in dealing with matters of prayer. Rather, he describes that the triune God has the same purpose in dealing with matters of prayer: spiritual formation.

Each section of the book has a special focus. Our Lord deals with the needs of inner change in the person who prays, the Father deals with our intimate relationship for the person who prays, and the Holy Spirit deals with our ministry. These three areas end up in one destination: spiritual transformation both in our character and work. He is not only talking about the truth of prayer, but also the experience of prayer.

The first chapter of the book “Simple Prayer” is wonderful. It encourages everyone to pray. The Trinity welcomes everyone to come as they are to the throne of the Lord in prayer. Prayer is the greatest grace for every sinner or every child of God to proceed to God. He loves us and waits for us to come to Him, just like a father expects his children to come home.

Jesus illustrated the heart of the Father in Luke 18:9-14 and Luke 15:15-32. The former Bible passage tells us that the unworthy sinful tax-collector with his humble prayer was even more welcomed by the Father than the self-righteous man, and the latter Bible passage tells us that the prodigal son was welcomed by his father.

Simple Prayer is an idea that has been discovered in the Bible by the author who claims it will bring a revolutionary change to our prayer life. We can pray even when we

feel angry or sinful, because our God, who is a loving Father, is willing to care about us in all situations, even during times we have no desire to pray at all.

Simple Prayer involves ordinary people bringing ordinary concerns to a loving and compassionate Father. There is no pretense in Simple Prayer.¹¹ This kind of Simple Prayer seems very self-centered in the beginning. However, according to Foster, this kind of prayer life will wonderfully and gradually be moved by the grace of God through His Spirit to the center of God, which fosters spiritual formation through the prayer.

In chapter 15, the author talks about prayer for ordinary things. We live a life full of ordinary things, like eating, sleeping, playing, working, and running errands. If we can develop a prayerful heart with God and get connected with Him when we are doing all these ordinary things in our daily lives, it can be wonderful. We will experience the presence of God, as Brother Lawrence did when he was working in the monastery kitchen.

The author exemplifies this idea through the life of Jesus. Jesus lived a life in an ordinary way. He worked a blue-collar job. He was even born in a manger. Yet His life was holy and spiritual for over 30 years, even during the early years prior to his preaching ministry. God values the ordinary.¹²

Therefore, we can make our home and our workplace into our sanctuary. We can pray wherever we are, and we can try our best to pray in whatever we are doing.

¹¹ Richard Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 10.

¹² Foster, *Prayer*, 173.

These two concepts, both in Simple Prayer and Ordinary Place, can bring our spiritual formation down to earth in our prayer life.

Application Emphasis (Valuable Concepts)

Relationship with the Father, simplicity in spoken words in prayer, unconditional acceptance by the Father, and ordinary things in the context of prayers are valuable concepts for an effective prayer. These values need to be taught and grasped firmly by the attendees of the Prayer Center. They are vital in developing a good prayer life leading to spiritual formation.

Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference? — Philip Yancey

Yancey uses a question-and-answer approach in his book about prayer, and he wants to make his book interesting to read for us. For example, he uses questions to argue his points and he provides lots of everyday stories to support them. This approach makes people identify with the issues he is talking about, and people who read his book will be engaged by the topics he discusses. The first part of his book addresses the meaning of prayer as a “relationship” with God, and then it goes into the mystery of prayer in the second part. Then, in parts three, four, and five, he deals with practical areas of prayer: the language, dilemma, and practice of praying. The arrangement of this book is very logical and it enables the reader to follow the subject matter easily.

The insight from the author in the second part, “Unraveling the Mysteries,”¹³ is striking to the reader. Yancey mentions that Jesus did not pray for the elimination of temptation for Peter and Judas during his betrayal. God grants His people to have freedom to make a choice during temptation. Peter chose to repent yet Judas did not, and the result turned out to be different. Jesus did not pray for His Father to send angels to save Him from trouble. Yet the Bible always encourages us to pray no matter the circumstances. Yancey says that this is the mystery of prayer.

Yancey also points out that we need to be patient and wait when God is postponing answers to our prayers. He uses an illustration from the Bible. While Jesus was asked to respond to 183 questions throughout the Gospels,¹⁴ he only gave three direct answers to those questions. All the answers were given through stories and parables, and His purpose of doing so was to let the inquiring persons figure out the answers for themselves. This approach of postponing answers to prayer is very insightful. By reading this book, it can help the reader acquire a strong conviction of prayer which is important for us to lay a strong foundation to pursue spiritual formation.

Application Emphasis (Answered Prayers)

Philip Yancey helps us to clear the doubts in our mind about the efficacy of prayer. He also focuses on how God will answer our prayers. People coming to the

¹³ Philip Yancey, *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 87-88.

¹⁴ Yancey, *Prayer*, 205.

Prayer Center have a strong desire for God to answer their prayers. They expect immediate responses from God when they pray. Philip Yancey points out that God has his own way to answer our prayers. He responds to our prayers in various ways: directly, indirectly, and in a period of time. Most of the time God answers our prayers indirectly.

This teaching will help the attendees in the Prayer Center to be patient and sensitive to discover His answers for our prayers. This book helps us to build a strong conviction about God who will answer our prayers. The approach to prayer is not only built on trust and devotion, but upon a strong mind and reasoning. Yancy does a good job in this area and that is the reason why I chose this book for reading.

Tell it Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in his Stories and Prayers —
Eugene Peterson

Eugene Peterson tries to tear down the fences that we have erected between language that deals with God and language that deals with the people around us.¹⁵ He expounds this truth through many stories told by Jesus in Luke 9:51–19:27. He wants to cultivate a sense of continuity between the prayers we offer to God and the conversations we have with people in our daily life. This is a tremendous help to break through our prayers so that we can pray easily and bring us to spiritual formation.

The short prayers of Jesus on the cross are related to His sufferings on earth. It is a true feeling to what he suffered on the cross when he prayed to His Father. The last

¹⁵ Eugene Peterson, *Tell it Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in his Stories and Prayers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 4.

seven prayers of Jesus on the cross can provide significant spiritual formation when we apply them to our prayer life. Just as Peterson says,

The praying community of the church has prayed these last words of our dying Savior to practice the presence of Jesus. We sink our souls into the mystery, these “depths” (Ps. 130) in which our salvation is forged. We want our death to be congruent with his death—congruent with his sacrificial life, a willed offering of all that we are, and a witness to the resurrection.”¹⁶

The prayer of thanksgiving in Matthew 11:25-26 is a very natural and yet significant response that reveals the meekness of Jesus’ character and his absolute trust in the Father. The misunderstanding of his fellow coworker, John the Baptist, about his role of the Messiah, and the unrepentant heart of the people towards his ministry in the cities around the Sea of Galilee cannot make him feel disappointed. This result is due to his close relationship with His Father through prayer. He knows that the Father is with him and supports him.

Peterson has the gift of Bible exposition in his teachings. He digs out the deep meaning of the stories and prayers by Jesus, and the meaning is related to the human heart and feeling. Through Peterson’s teachings, our prayer life can be attached to the Word of God and applied to prayer life and mold us to be like Christ.

Application Emphasis (Language in Prayer)

Eugene Peterson teaches us how to use common language to communicate with God in prayer. He gives us a powerful role model to follow: our Lord Jesus Christ. His

¹⁶ Peterson, *Tell it Slant*, 240.

language in dealing with people in daily life helps us to break down the fence between the holy and secular in prayer language.

Language in prayer is important. The simpler the prayer language is, the better the expression to God will be! Common language from our daily life used in prayer will help us to communicate with God in a natural and sincere way. Peterson expresses this truth in a dynamic way and his book will pave a smooth way in our prayer life.

The Way of the Heart: Connecting with God through Prayer, Wisdom, and Silence —
Henri J.M. Nouwen

This book is short and precise in dealing with a sophisticated matter: the heart. The first part of the book, which is on solitude, is very insightful. As Nouwen asserts, “The solitude is not a private therapeutic place. Rather it is the place of conversion, the place where the old self dies and the new self is born, the place where the emergence of the new man and the new woman occurs.”¹⁷ This is the best definition of being in solitude, according to Nouwen. We frequently misunderstand that solitude can be obtained only through being in a remote place.

People can identify with what the author is saying about the need for us to be in solitude. We are buried with secular ‘musts’ and ‘oughts’, and our greedy nature inside arouses us to pursue these desires. If we don’t get what we want, we will be easily angry. Therefore, Nouwen says that solitude is a great way for the pastor to get rid of

¹⁷ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart: Connecting with God through Prayer, Wisdom, and Silence* (New York: Random House, 1981), 17.

anger and greed. Anger and greed can become a driving force that shapes behavior for the worse. After experiencing solitude, a pastor can be transformed to be a compassionate servant of God to the people.

The last part of this book deals with the subject of prayer. He quotes the method of the desert saints, which can help us learn how to achieve praying without ceasing. The mind and heart need to be knitted together. How do we achieve this spiritual discipline? He mentions that we should use this short prayer frequently: "Have mercy on me, Lord." This short prayer will help one to keep the spirit of praying without ceasing.

He also mentions the method of Saint Teresa. Saint Teresa suggested that if we pray for one hour every day without stopping, then we can do what is right for the whole day. From this practice, we can achieve the spirit of praying without ceasing. Many people can echo what Saint Teresa suggests about her prayer method from their prayer life experience. Nouwen gives us an inward and yet simple approach to prayer for spiritual formation.

Application Emphasis (Solitude)

The environment of the Prayer Center is the mountain. All attendees of the Prayer Center meeting are required to seclude themselves alone in a cabin or a quiet place for solitude. Solitude is a preparation of our heart before God in a secluded place, so that we can focus on God for a longer period of time in prayer. Nouwen is excellent in dealing with this subject, which is vital to prayer efficacy.

Role Model of Praying Christians

Man of Blessing: A Life of St. Benedict — Carmen Acevedo Butcher

This book is written with interest and inspiration. The major structure of this book has two parts: the life story of St. Benedict and the adoption of his name by many Popes. The story starts with the birth of St. Benedict and ends with the story of his death.

There were miracles and great works accomplished by St. Benedict during his life. St. Benedict was a wonderful and godly Christian who lived in a place near the villa which was built by the cruel and devious king Nero in the first century AD. King Nero then persecuted Christians, and St. Benedict lived in a place near the ruins of Nero's resort. It seems to me that God raised St. Benedict to witness for Christ in such a dark world which was influenced by the evil king. There is a great contrast between the monk and the king. Nero had the most power on earth, while St. Benedict had none. Nero had a Roman Empire under his rule, while St. Benedict had the Monte Cassino monastery in his ministry.

However, the constructive influence and spiritual blessing of St. Benedict has been brought to human beings from generation to generation, even though Emperor Nero brought destructive tragedy to Christians. One had "world" power and produced evil, while the other had "heavenly" power and produced good. The good influence overcame the bad one. This is all because of God, who makes the difference. The light of

St. Benedict was shining for God in the dark world in his day and his light still keeps on shining even today.

The prophetic story told by St. Benedict to the Goth King Totila, who would defeat the Roman Empire, was the most amazing among all his stories. This story showed that St. Benedict was used by God just as one of the great prophets in the Bible. St. Benedict could even detect the soldier who pretended to be King Totila. King Totila was shocked and humiliated by St. Benedict, who was able to discover the king's pretension. The king finally surrendered before St. Benedict and he became a humble person after the king's visit with the monk.

The key success of St. Benedict in his spiritual life was his union with Christ through his prayer life. He spent much of his time in prayer, in solitary moments with God. Therefore, his deeds were initiated by God and for God. What St. Benedict did was following what Christ did when He was on Earth. Christ would not do anything without the will of the Father. Christ has a perfect union with His Heavenly Father. Therefore, what He did had spiritual impact on people and the influence has persisted. This story offers encouragement for us to engage in the practice of prayer for spiritual formation.

Application Emphasis (Union with Christ)

St. Benedict secluded himself on the mountain to spend time in prayer and meditation for a long time, trying to achieve union with Christ. He turned out to be a spiritual giant that brought spiritual transformation to others for centuries. Every member of the Prayer Center will be encouraged to read his story and achievements.

His patience, self-denial, loving kindness to others, and dedication to follow Christ through prayer are worth following.

The Complete Works of E.M. Bounds — E. M. Bounds

E. M. Bounds spent three hours in prayer from 4:00–7:00am every morning in his life. He is not only a man of words but a man of action in prayer. His writings about prayer are short in each chapter but prolific in all areas of prayer. His writings are biblically related to prayers. He seldom quotes any other resources of prayer both from books or other authors in his writings. However, his writings do inspire us to pray. I believe that his writings are a product of his life's prayers. He set a wonderful example for us to follow in prayers. The best method of prayer is prayer itself. By keeping a consistent prayer life, we will grow in prayer and spiritual formation. E. M. Bounds is a man who led by example.

Application Emphasis (Constant Practice)

E. M. Bounds set an example for attendees of the Prayer Center to follow: to learn prayer through practice. Each person needs encouragement in spiritual disciplines, especially in prayer. By reading this book, Bounds can light the fire of prayer in our heart and inspire us to continue our journey of prayer.

Conclusion

Through studying these books, my vision for establishing the Prayer Center has strengthened, and I am very encouraged by them to continue developing this ministry. Each book is a rich resource for teaching us about prayer. Among these books, I discovered that *Praying the Word* by Enzo Bianchi is one of the most important books to guide us in learning how to pray. This book is simple in structure but profound in its teachings.

All prayers should be tied to the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Enzo's book gives us an emphasis on the direction of praying with the words of God (Lectio Divina). The purpose of the Lectio Divina is that the Christian will be molded to be like Christ through being transformed in praying with the words of God, and through obeying His teachings after praying with the words of God. However, Bianchi did not expound this truth in a comprehensive way in his book. Chapter Five, "Formation in Lectio Divina," is exceptionally well-written. This chapter covers the development of Lectio Divina in a progressive way, with strong support of the spiritual forefathers in each stage of development. This chapter brings a staunch conviction about Lectio Divina to every reader.

The second most important book about prayer to me is *With Christ in the School of Prayer* by Andrew Murray. He excels in dealing with the subject of the Spirit of God and prayer. The book has five chapters (2, 7, 9, 13, and 25), which directly or indirectly cover the relationship between the Spirit of God and prayer. The Spirit of God energizes and effectuates the prayer life of every Christian. However, the author forgot to

mention and elaborate on a very important Bible verse which is about how the Spirit helps a Christian in prayer, namely Romans 8:26.

The third book, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* by Richard Foster, is down to earth for the beginner, and yet it can bring experienced Christians to reach to the top in their prayer life. The love of God is the thread of prayer which draws us to God, according to Foster. The book is divided into three sections which are inward, upward, and outward in prayer. These three sections are related to the three persons in the Godhead. Foster starts with transforming ourselves inward in prayer by Jesus Christ, being related upward to our Heavenly Father, and ministering to His people and works with the help of the Holy Spirit outward.

This is a book which covers prayer quite comprehensively. The reader will get a feeling of warmth and desire for prayer after reading it. However, the book is missing the talk about prayer in relation to God's power, kingdom, and glory. These three elements reveal God's character, and vision through prayers in the Bible. There are quite a few examples to illustrate these elements. The prayers of Elijah and Samuel in the Old Testament and the prayers of the disciples in Acts both demonstrate God's power, kingdom, and glory. However, it is a wonderful book for us to learn in our prayer life.

The fourth book, *Man of Blessing: A Life of St. Benedict* by Carmen Acevedo Butcher, is one of the best to tell us about role model in prayer life. After reading it, readers will find out that St. Benedict's life is more or less like Christ or one of the

apostles. He performed miracles very frequently, even including raising a child from death. His teachings were full of authority.

God demonstrated His power and glory through St. Benedict because he had a life of “union with Christ.” He praised, prayed, and worked every day. He also taught his followers in this way in his monasteries. This book gives us a fresh and easy grasp about the life of this great man of God. However, Butcher does not elaborate on Benedict’s influence on later generations. She also doesn’t clarify Benedict’s experience of “the injured flesh healing the wounded spirit.”¹⁸

The Spirit of God, not the injured flesh, helps us to overcome lust, according to the teaching of Bible. The thorn of the bush helped to heal Benedict’s lustful thoughts, according to Butcher. However, this statement shows that it is a religion which emphasizes human effort to change behavior, not life transformation through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Benedict lived an austere life, just like John the Baptist. The author needs to explain that the austere life of Benedict is also a life full of grace by the power of the Spirit through his prayer life, not of his own effort. In conclusion, the book inspires readers to follow St. Benedict as a role model in prayer.

In chapter four, I will provide the research survey using both quantitative and qualitative data to show the results that address some of my thesis questions related to prayer. In chapter five, I will explain the results and apply them to my ministry as well as to the church communities who need it.

¹⁸ Butcher, *Man of Blessing*, 58.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY FOR STUDYING THE PRAYER CENTER

The Plan

I conducted a descriptive survey for my thesis project to find out if there is a relationship between prayer and spiritual formation for those who attend a Prayer Center meeting. At no point in the past have I collected feedback from the participants regarding the influence of the Prayer Center on their lives. For the sake of establishing a Prayer Center and serving the Christian community, I conducted this survey in order to test the hypothesis that the Prayer Center contributes in a positive way to spiritual formation. Through the collection of data from those who attended the Prayer Center, I wish to learn more about how the Center serves the Christian community.

This study has two parts. First of all, a questionnaire (Part A) was conducted with 50 people who attended the prayer meeting on the mountain on June 24, 2017. Only the results of 30 people from the whole group were used for data analysis, interpretation, and exploration of the relationship between the Prayer Center and greater spiritual formation. The choice to use 30 people is based upon those who both finished the two full sessions of three hours for the prayer meeting and were willing to take both the pre-test and post-test surveys.

Secondly, written feedback (Part B) was solicited from each of the ten people who had attended the Prayer Center meeting more than once. Those selected were required to write down their honest feedback about their experience participating in the Prayer

Center meeting. Only participants who had attended the two full sections in each Prayer Center meeting and were willing to write feedback were selected.

Participants who wrote their feedback about the Prayer Mountain experience differed greatly in their age, from 20s to 50s. They also differed in the number of times they attended the prayer meeting in the past. Some attended two to three times, while some participated more than ten times. In their report, the time span for attending the first Prayer Center meeting ranged from 2003 to the latest one in 2017. All the narratives for the feedback review were finished by participants in just three weeks from June 21 to July 12, 2017. Those who participated in Part B were not given open-ended questions to answer like those who completed the questionnaire in Part A. They were only required to write down a short essay of how they felt and what they experienced while attending the Prayer Center meetings.

The Prayer Center is a prayer meeting conducted in two sessions and lasts a total of three hours. It takes place in Scotts Valley, California. The first session is a solitude moment with the Lord for each participant in prayer, meditation, and Bible study. This part takes two hours. Participants are required to pray in a small prayer cabin, or pray outside in a quiet place. The second session which lasts one hour is a corporate gathering for worship, a short message, and group prayers. The solitude moment with the Lord for two hours has a purpose: each participant is given ample time to calm down and turn their mind to focus on God. After the solitude, everyone comes together as a group for one hour in worship, inspirational message, and prayer. The spiritual atmosphere of being together for the corporate prayer is geared to maximize their

spiritual experience after everyone has been prepared and fueled spiritually by God in their solitude.

The Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire survey had two sections. The first section contained the pre-test questions, and the second section contained the post-test questions. It had three sub-sections. The first sub-section covered demographic questions such as gender, age, and number of years being a believer. The second sub-section dealt with seven areas of spiritual formation. The third sub-section had questions that focused on prayer disciplines. Please refer to Appendix A and B to see the pre-test in both English and Chinese.

The post-test section had 14 questions. These questions involved participants responding to reactions after their Prayer Center meeting experience. The questions focused mainly on their reactions to spiritual formation after the meeting. First, I am going to explain the pre-test results so that we can understand the background of the group before I explain the results of the second section. I will selectively pick up some areas of the survey result that are applicable to the hypothesis of the project.

Pre-test Questionnaire

Demographic Questions

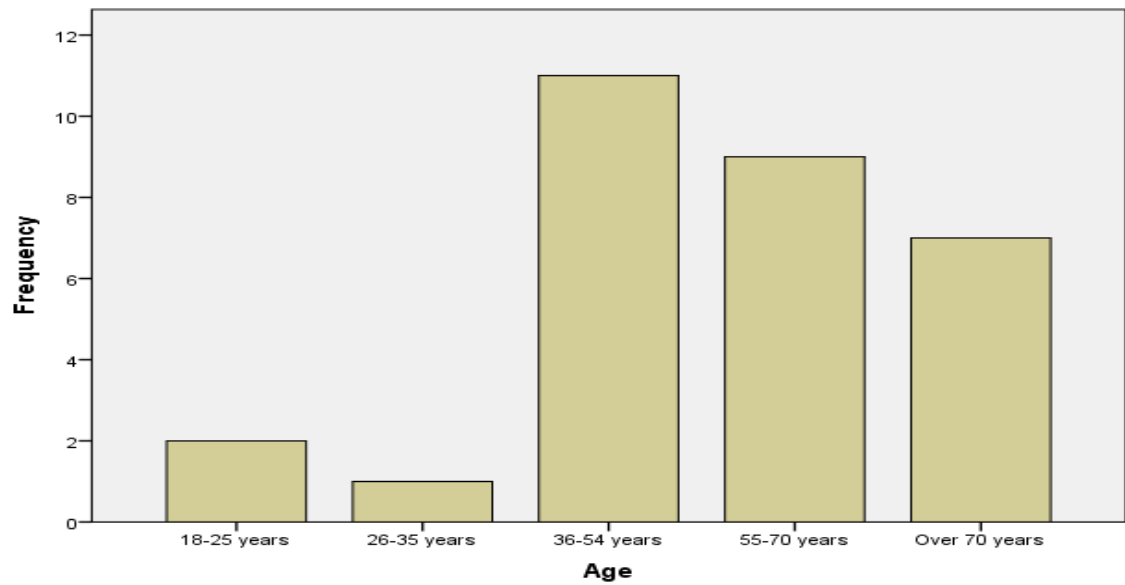


Figure 1. Age of Participants.

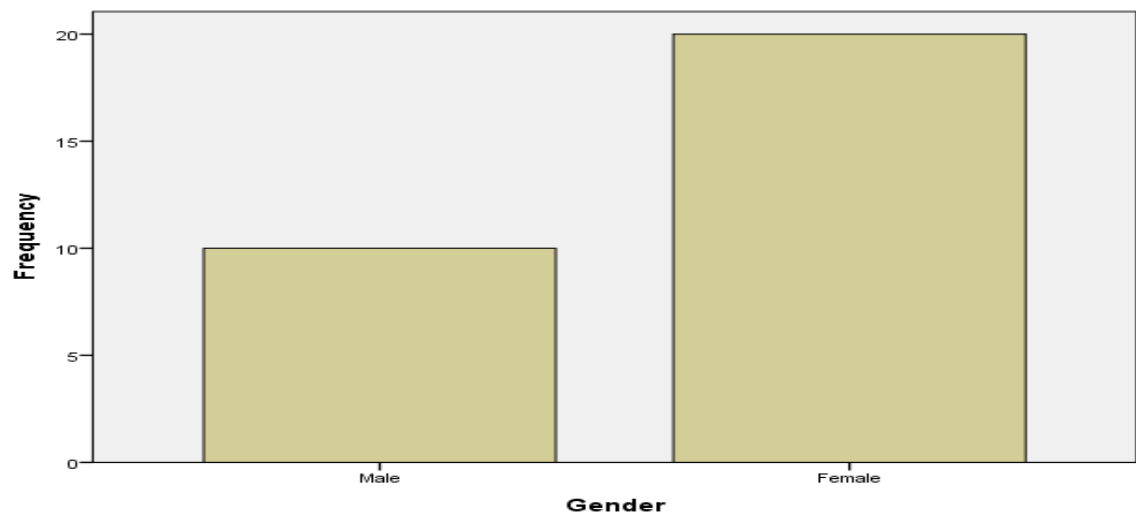


Figure 2. Gender of Participants.

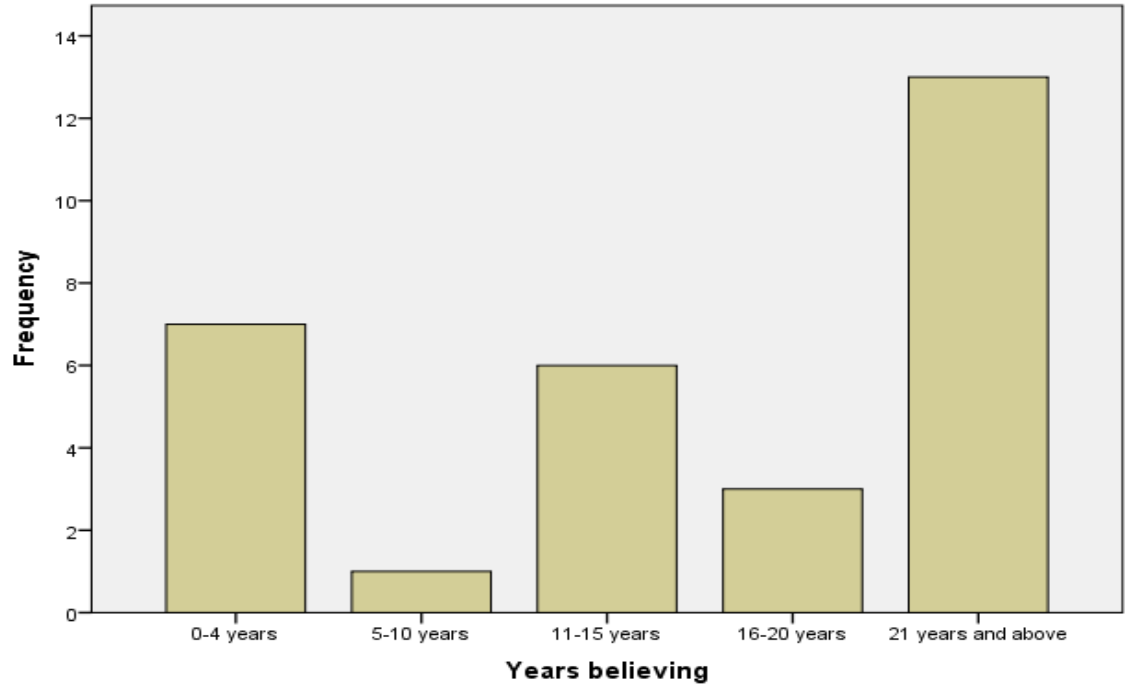


Figure 3. Participants' Years Believing.

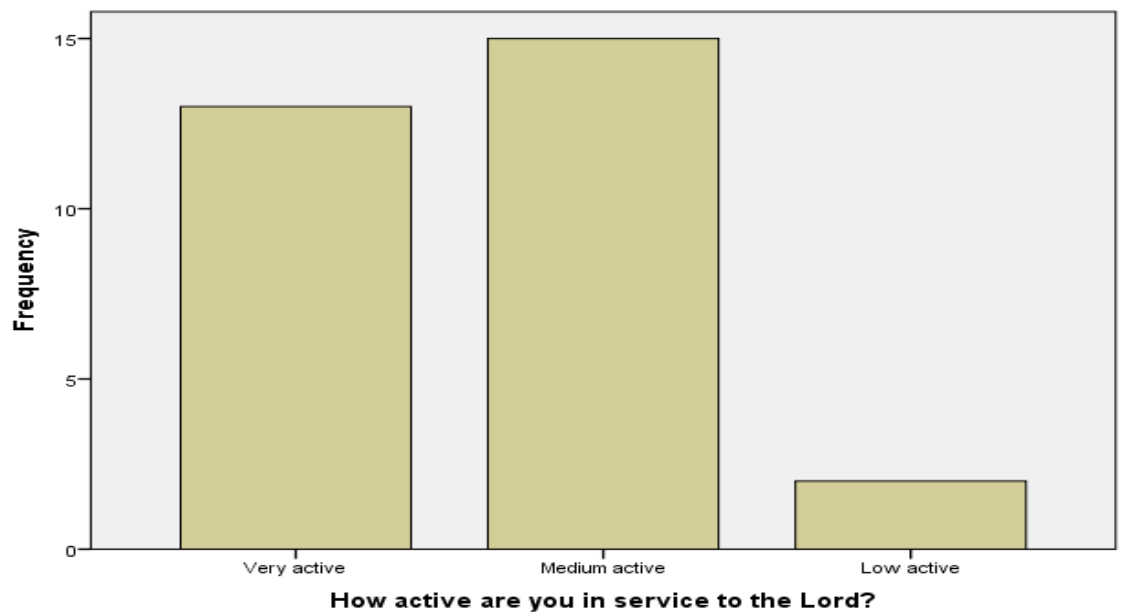


Figure 4. Participants' Level of Activity in Service to the Lord.

Figures 1–4 above explore four areas: age, sex, years of believing, and service to the Lord. This group comes from the church members of Home of Christ Church in Newark, California. The prayer meeting is an annual prayer meeting at the Mountain. The members include congregants speaking Mandarin, Cantonese, or English. Most of the participants are Mandarin-speaking church members, while English and Cantonese members are in a minority. In the corporate prayer meeting, I provide translations, and the prayer lists are written in both English and Chinese.

Through statistical analysis, I found that approximately 47% who participated are 54 years or younger. This means that 53% are 55 years and older. Among five age groups, the age group of 36-54 is approximately 37%, which is the largest single group. It shows that my church is dominated by middle-age members and my church leadership team members are also within this age range.

In gender, 67% are female, and 33% are male. I have double the female church members who are interested in going to the Prayer Mountain than male ones. In terms of the number of years the participants self-report on how long they have been a believer in Christ, the largest single group are those who have believed 21 years and above (13 out of 30 participants). This was followed by seven people from the “0 – 4 years” category. The third largest group were those in the middle category of “11 – 15 years” which included six participants. This data indicates that, at least in terms of time that they have been a believer in Christ, there is good representation from my church of those who are young believers, mid-range believers, and longer-term believers who are willing to go to the Prayer Mountain to pray.

Table 4.1. How active are you in service to the Lord?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent ¹⁹	Cumulative Percent
Very active	13	43.3	43.3	43.3
Medium active	15	50.0	50.0	93.3
Low active	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
Not active	0	0	0	
Total	30	100.0	100.0	

In regard to ministry to the Lord, I found that approximately 93% of the group members are serving the Lord in a medium or active role. Only 7% are in an inactive role.

Seven Areas of Spiritual Formation

Table 2 below shows the results of the following question from the survey:

For each area listed below, indicate how impactful it is for encouraging your spiritual formation? For each area, please circle the answer of a scale of impact from the least to the most impact (from 0, 1, 2, 3, 4...to 10):

- i. Bible study
- ii. Sunday worship
- iii. Small group
- iv. special revival meeting
- v. mission trip
- vi. ministry to the Lord
- vii. prayer life

¹⁹ The valid percent shows the real number of the participants who answered the questions. Some members did not answer all the questions. If they did not answer some of the questions, I did not count them in the result.

Table 4.2. Seven areas of spiritual formation.

	No.	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Sunday worship	28	5	10	8.57
Small group	28	0	10	7.75
Prayer life	27	0	10	7.67
Bible study	28	3	10	7.18
Ministry to the Lord	27	0	9	6.07
Special revival meeting	27	0	10	5.19
Mission trip	27	0	10	4.37

In regard to the impact on spiritual formation on a scale of from 0–10, with 0 having the lowest impact and 10 having the highest impact, among seven spiritual disciplines, I found that the mean of almost every discipline is above the mid-point of the scale. I found that Sunday worship, which has a mean of 8.57, is the highest one, while mission trip, which has a mean of 4.37, is the lowest. It shows that church members are heavily relying on Sunday worship to nurture their spiritual life. Small group, which has a mean of 7.75, and prayer life, which has a mean of 7.67, are the second and third most impactful factors on participants’ spiritual formation.

Prayer Life Survey

I found that largest subgroup (8 out of 30) spend 16-30 minutes in prayer every day. The group that spends the most time in prayer (30 minutes or more daily) and least time in prayer (5 minutes or less daily) has the same amount of people in number (5 out

of 30). In regard to the satisfaction of their prayer life in this group, I found that the majority of people (18 of 30) are “considerably satisfied” with their prayer life. Only eight people in this group are “a little satisfied” with their prayer life. Half of the people (15 of 30) in this group show strong belief in prayer for their spiritual formation, while the other half of them just state that they believe in prayer.

Table 4.3. Time spent in daily prayer.

0-5 minutes	5
5-10 minutes	7
11-15 minutes	5
16-30 minutes	8
31 minutes +	5
Total	30

Table 4.4. How satisfied are you with your prayer life?

Very much satisfied	4
Considerably satisfied	18
A little satisfied	8
Not at all satisfied	0
Total	30

Table 4.5. Your attitude towards prayer for spiritual formation.

Strongly believe	15
Believe	15
Neutral	0
Don't believe	0
Total	30

Post-Test Survey

Attendance of Prayer Meeting History

For the attendance of prayer meeting history, I have provided the first two survey questions and the survey results in the tables below. I found that people who previously attended this prayer meeting before they joined this particular prayer meeting (15 of 30) is the same amount of people who had never attended the meeting (15 of 30). Among the previous attendees, the majority attended the meeting from 0 to 6 times (25 of 30).

Table 4.6. Is this your first time participating?

Yes	15
No	15
Total	30

Table 4.7. Number of times attended.

0	15
1-3	4
4-6	6
7-9	0
10 and above	5
Total	30

Survey Responses after the Prayer Meeting

The results of the survey taken after the Prayer Meeting indicate strong agreement that participants had a favorable experience in each respective area. This is indicated by the overwhelming number of participants who selected the “Strongly agree” or “Agree” categories on the response scale almost to the exclusion of the rest of the categories on the five-point scale. Of the six questions given below, the largest number of responses were for the “Strongly agree” category for four of the six. In addition, there was only an occasional usage of the “Neutral” category and a complete absence of the “Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” categories.

Table 4.8. After attending the prayer meeting, do you feel a stronger sense of the presence of God?

Strongly agree	14
Agree	13
Neutral	3
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0
Total	30

Table 4.9. After the prayer mountain meeting, the degree of confidence that you have that God will answer your prayers in the days to come is stronger.

Strongly agree	12
Agree	14
Neutral	4
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0
Total	30

Table 4.10. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you agree that the environment on the mountain will help you to have a better experience in prayer?

Strongly agree	18
Agree	11
Neutral	1
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0
Total	30

Table 4.11. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you agree that the program of the mountain meeting will help you to have a better experience in prayer?

Strongly agree	10
Agree	17
Neutral	3
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	0
Total	30

Table 4.12. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that you need to become more humble before God?

Strongly agree	22
Agree	7
Neutral	1
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0
Total	30

Table 4.13. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that you want to study the Bible more?

Strongly agree	17
Agree	13
Neutral	0
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	0
Total	30

The results of another five survey questions as shown in tables 14–18 below reveal that a majority of the participants responded favorably to the prayer meeting experience. They reported they want to serve God more fervently (29 of 30), that their

passion for sharing the gospel with others has increased (28 of 30), and that they feel they know Jesus better (30 of 30).

Table 4.14. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that you need to rebuild broken relationships with others?

Yes	26
No	4
Total	30

Table 4.15. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that you want to serve God more fervently?

Yes	29
No	0
Somewhat	1
Total	30

Table 4.16. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that your passion for sharing the gospel with others will be stronger?

Yes	28
No	2
Total	30

Table 4.17. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that you know Jesus more?

Yes	30
No	0

Table 4.18. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you get spiritual nourishment?

Yes	28
No	2
Total	30

The last descriptive question on the survey was, “If you answered ‘yes’ on the question, ‘After the prayer meeting, do you get spiritual nourishment,’ how?” In response, 21 out of the 28 positive respondents shared something favorable about gaining spiritual nourishment after the prayer meeting. What they shared about their experience of spiritual nourishment came in three areas: they felt close to God, they enjoyed being with God, and they felt a sense of humility before God.

The Results of the Qualitative Feedback²⁰

In regard to the second part of the research which is in the form of qualitative feedback on the prayer meeting experience, I collected information from ten people. Half of the participants were male and the other half female. They are all church

²⁰ Content of qualitative feedback can be found in Appendix D.

members of Home of Christ Church, in Newark, California. Two of them are in their late 30s, and they left the church eight years ago to serve in another church. One of them was my previous church's English pastor who is now shepherding another church of 80 people. The other person was my previous church youth worker who is now a high school teacher, serving the Lord in a local church in the community where he lives.

There were three female Christians who are 70 years old or older. They are retired from their jobs and are currently ministry helpers in the church. A seminary professor and a seminary student also participated in the survey. There was a children's pastor who is in charge of both the children's ministry and Awana program. There was a female Christian, 45 years old, who just joined our church two years ago and is now leading the prayer ministry in our church. Lastly, there was a female Christian who is about 45 years old and helps the church as a secretary.

Those participants who had attended the prayer meeting more than once were required to write down their feedback only and send the remarks back to me. Their responses all show that they had a favorable experience with the prayer mountain meeting. They experienced amazing changes in their spiritual life. For example, one of them stated that he came back again and again to the prayer mountain after the first experience on the prayer mountain. He experienced changes in his prayer life like the laments of Jeremiah, praises like David, longings like Paul, silences like Elijah. Another participant broke through his difficulty and enjoyed praying for lots of people in his prayer mountain experience. Now he is experiencing a stable and enjoyable prayer life.

One sister did feel the joy of encountering God and the joy excelled her joy of seeing the sunrise for the first time in her life: “Over there, I experienced that I met God, listening to His voice. This wonderful spiritual experience was far better than my first experience of seeing the sunrise.”²¹ One sister also felt awesome before God and gave praise to Him when she prayed on the mountain. Her inner person was strengthened by His Spirit, and she dedicated her life again to live for Christ.

One brother did experience a similar closeness and joy of talking to the Heavenly Father on the mountain like Jesus with His Heavenly Father. He said, “It was peaceful, and inspirational, and I felt very near to God, and just like Psalm 3:4, ‘I was crying to the LORD with my voice, And He answered me from His holy mountain.’”²² A sister who loves to pray also felt enthusiastic about the prayer mountain experience. She said, “I treasured the solitary moments (about two hours) with the Lord, enjoying the intimacy with Jesus. In these moments, I was totally refreshed, cleansed, and recharged, and satisfied with joy and love in the Lord.”²³

Even one female Christian who felt uncomfortable physically on the mountain due to her polio, reported she felt spiritually exuberant by attending the corporate part of the prayer mountain meeting. More exploration on the qualitative feedback will be discussed in chapter five.

²¹ Willa Zhu, *Testimony on the Prayer Mountain Experience*, July 10, 2017, Appendix D.

²² Pastor Sidney Yen, *Praying on the Mountain*, July 4, 2017, Appendix D.

²³ Wang Xiao Jun, *Sharing on Prayer Mountain Experience*, July 3, 2017, Appendix D.

Conclusion

The results of the survey project both in terms of the questionnaire and narrative statements revealed that respondents are favorable to the prayer meeting experience. The individuals who participated in the project differed in age, gender, and years of believing. Their spiritual maturity in terms of serving the Lord and prayer life also differed. Moreover, some of the participants are ministers of the gospel while some of them are just new believers and do not work for the church. They definitely showed that they reaped a strong spiritual formation after they attended the prayer meeting. Many experienced life changes after the prayer meeting, and those changes could be a great benefit to their whole life. In the final chapter, I am going to talk about the implications of the results and how they can be applied to our personal spiritual life as well as church ministry.

CHAPTER FIVE

THESIS CONCLUSIONS

Implications of the Survey Results

The outcome of my thesis-project to test my hypothesis using both quantitative and qualitative methods is positive. It means that the Prayer Center does have a strong and positive relationship with greater spiritual formation. Among the quantitative survey results, I found that the favorable impact of the prayer meeting is immediate to the participants. Exactly 90% of the participants indicated “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” after the prayer meeting that they felt a stronger sense of the presence of God. Over 86% indicated a stronger confidence that God will answer their prayers. Over 96% of participants agreed that, after the prayer mountain meeting, they felt a need to become humbler before God. In terms of spiritual formation, over 93% agreed that they have greater spiritual formation after experiencing the prayer mountain meeting. This is just a partial summary of the affirming feedback received from the participants.

One question left unanswered concerns how long the impact of the prayer mountain experience will last. Qualitative data indicates that the effects have a lasting impact. However, for the most part, this question remains difficult to answer. In order to dig deeper into the data, I did some statistical analysis by applying Independent T-Tests to the data. The Independent T-Tests compare the means for males and females to see if they are equal or statistically different from each other. The Independent T-Test was used in order to find out if males were responding differently from females on any

of the Likert-scaled questions. All the comparisons below show that males and females scored means that were almost identical to each other on these questions. In other words, no gender differences were found.

Table 5.1. Group statistics.

	Gender	No.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
How active are you in service to the Lord?	Male	10	1.40	.516	.163
	Female	20	1.75	.639	.143
Bible study	Male	10	7.70	2.058	.651
	Female	18	6.89	2.220	.523
Sunday worship	Male	10	8.40	1.578	.499
	Female	18	8.67	1.283	.302
Small group	Male	10	7.90	2.846	.900
	Female	18	7.67	2.449	.577
Confidence that God will answer prayers	Male	10	1.70	.675	.213
	Female	20	1.75	.716	.160
Environment will help a better experience in prayer	Male	10	1.30	.483	.153
	Female	20	1.50	.607	.136
Program will help a better experience in prayer	Male	10	2.00	.667	.211
	Female	20	1.65	.587	.131
Need to become more humble	Male	10	1.20	.632	.200
	Female	20	1.35	.489	.109
Want to study Bible more	Male	10	1.40	.516	.163
	Female	20	1.45	.510	.114
Special revival meeting	Male	10	5.50	3.749	1.186
	Female	17	5.00	3.298	.800
Prayer life	Male	10	8.20	1.932	.611

	Female	17	7.35	2.827	.686
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In the table below, for the question regarding the effect of “Mission trip” to participants’ spiritual formation, the men reported a much higher level (mean: 5.30) than women (mean: 3.82). For the question regarding the effect “Ministry to the Lord” has on their spiritual formation, the men reported a higher level (mean: 6.80) than women (mean 5.65). However, the results are not statistically significant using the T-test. I did learn that males and females in these two groups responded favorably to the prayer meeting. Males and females alike need the prayer mountain experience to elevate their spiritual formation.

Table 5.2. Group statistics on ‘Mission trip’ and ‘Ministry to the Lord’.

	Gender	No.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Mission trip	Male	10	5.30	3.974	1.257
	Female	17	3.82	4.172	1.012
Ministry to the Lord	Male	10	6.80	1.874	.593
	Female	17	5.65	3.353	.813

There was one particular question that was approaching statistical significance. For the question “Time Spent in Daily Prayer” the men reported higher levels (mean: 3.60) of prayer than the women (mean: 2.75). Although these results were not statistically significant, they were approaching significance.

Table 5.3. 'Time spent in daily prayer' approaching statistical significance.

Gender		No.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Time spent in daily prayer	Male	10	3.60	1.350	.427
	Female	20	2.75	1.333	.298

Independent Samples Test					
		t-test for Equality of Means			
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
Time spent in daily prayer	Equal variances assumed	1.640	28	.112	

The result of approaching statistical significance is indicated by the "Sig. (2-tailed)" column in the table above. The number .112 indicates that the size of the difference between the means for males (mean = 3.60) and the females (mean = 2.75) could only have occurred by random chance 11% of the time. In other words, it is a rare event to see the difference between the means that large. However, standard conventions within statistical tests use 5% as the cutoff to conclude a real, reliable difference is present.²⁴ That is, the difference between means must occur by random chance only 5% or less of the time to be considered statistically significant. Although 11% does not meet the 5% criteria, it is common within social science literature to refer

²⁴ Robert R. Pagano, *Understanding Statistics in the Behavioral Sciences*, 10th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2013). Specifically, see chapter 14 on Student's t-test for correlated and independent groups.

to statistical results as “approaching statistical significance.”²⁵ This opens the door to the possibility that if more research participants had been used in the study, the 11% probability number could have shrunk to 5% or less. If this were to occur, then results that were approaching statistical significance surpass the 5% threshold and are found to be statistically significant.

I also performed independent T-Tests to compare those with 15 or fewer years of belief with those who have 16 or more years being a believer. In other words, I was interested in finding out if younger believers differed on some of their responses than the more experienced believers. The tables below reveal the specific results of the T-tests for some of the questions that were found to be statistically significant or approaching significance.

Table 5.4. Group statistics: years of belief.

	Years of Belief	No.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Sunday worship	0-15 years	12	9.17	.718	.207
	16+ years	16	8.13	1.586	.397
Small group	0-15 years	12	8.67	1.303	.376
	16+ years	16	7.06	3.043	.761
Time spent in daily prayer	0-15 years	14	2.57	1.399	.374
	16+ years	16	3.44	1.263	.316

²⁵ Colin Robson, *Real World Research*, 3rd ed. (New York: Wiley, 2011). See chapter 13, The Analysis of Quantitative Data.

Table 5.5. Independent samples test 1.

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Sunday worship	Equal variances assumed	2.111	26	.045
Small group	Equal variances assumed	1.706	26	.100
Time spent in daily prayer	Equal variances assumed	-1.782	28	.086

Results indicate three T-Tests were significant or approaching statistical significance. The question on “Sunday worship” being impactful was statistically significant between the two groups with the younger believers (15 years or less) rating Sunday worship higher (mean: 9.17) than more experienced believers (mean: 8.13). This is indicated by the .045 probability value found in the column “Sig. (2-tailed).” As mentioned before, if this value is .05 or less, then the difference between the two means is found to be statistically significant. Also, the question “Small group” was approaching statistical (probability value = .10) significance with younger believers (15 years or less) rating it as more impactful (mean: 8.67) than the more experienced believers (mean: 7.06).

Lastly, the question “Time spent in daily prayer” was approaching statistical significance (probability value = .086) with older believers (16 years or more) rating it as more impactful (mean: 3.44) than the younger believers (mean: 2.57). Even though those three test areas show significant or approaching significant difference before the

prayer meeting between the younger believers and the old, they almost all feel the same positive impact after they attended the prayer meeting. All in all, the younger believers (15 years or less) responded to the prayer meeting in the same impactful way as the older believers (16 years or more). They both need and enjoyed the prayer mountain experience for greater spiritual formation.

The last group of Independent T-Tests compared those who attended the prayer mountain experience for the first time with those who had participated repeatedly. These tables show the results of the T-tests that were significant or approaching significance.

Table 5.6. Group statistics: first-time versus repeat participants.

	First time?	No.	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Do you feel a stronger sense of God?	Yes	13	1.77	.725	.201
	No	17	1.53	.624	.151
Confidence that God will answer prayers	Yes	13	1.85	.689	.191
	No	17	1.65	.702	.170
Environment will help a better experience in prayer	Yes	13	1.46	.660	.183
	No	17	1.41	.507	.123
Program will help a better experience in prayer	Yes	13	1.85	.689	.191
	No	17	1.71	.588	.143
Need to become more humble	Yes	13	1.54	.660	.183
	No	17	1.12	.332	.081
Want to study Bible more	Yes	13	1.46	.519	.144
	No	17	1.41	.507	.123
Need to become more humble	Yes	13	1.54	.660	.183
	No	17	1.12	.332	.081

Table 5.7. Independent samples test 2.

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Need to become more humble	Equal variances assumed	2.285	28	.030

There was one item that was statistically significant. For one of the post-test questions, “After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that you need to become more humble before God?” For those who participated in the prayer mountain meeting for the first time, they rated this question more towards “Strongly agree” (mean: 1.54) than those individuals who had participated in the prayer mountain meeting more than once (mean: 1.12). The reason might be that the first timers have never had this experience before, and they had a stronger feeling of being unworthy before God. As indicated in the table under the column “Sig. (2-tailed)” the probability value is below the .05 cutoff since it is .030.

Qualitative Feedback in Writings

In regard to the qualitative analysis, I found that the results that were favorable toward spiritual formation are overwhelming.²⁶ There are some areas that need to be

²⁶ The written feedback can be found in Appendix D.

addressed. The sense of holiness, feeling of unworthiness, and desire for spiritual cleansing strongly happened to one member when she prayed. She said,

When I finished praying a short moment I had a deep longing inside, longing to be cleansed by God. I cried before God, and I was filled by the Holy Spirit. I was so satisfied in my spirit. The moment I spent with the Lord was so brief but it was awesome. I was so happy, beyond what language could describe.²⁷

The joy, peace, and feelings of being recharged filled up the heart and mind of a brother when he prayed. In Matthew 11:28-29, Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” The brother said, “I experienced that the promise of Jesus was precious and real to me when I prayed on the prayer mountain, and all my worries and burdens were gone, and I enjoyed rest in God!”²⁸ A female participant prayed during the corporate meeting time and her vision for prayer has been enlarged.²⁹ The prayer needs covered not only the church, but the community, nation, and the world.

Participants submitting written responses also had a strong sense of God's power and feeling of unity in diversity when they gathered together in corporate meeting. Two people in their report showed that they clearly sensed the guidance of the Lord in prayer, and two of them responded to the calling of God to full-time ministry. One already graduated from seminary and became a pastor in the church. He said, “It

²⁷ Li Na, *Feedback on Prayer Mountain*, June 24, 2017, Appendix D.

²⁸ Ming Xin Ji, *Feedback on Prayer Mountain*, July 10, 2017, Appendix D.

²⁹ Wang Xiao Jun, *Sharing on Prayer Mountain Experience*, 7/3/17, Appendix D.

was once on the prayer mountain four years ago, I received a clear calling from the Lord for serving Him full time after I anxiously prayed for His confirmation of His calling to me. And I was then determined to quit my secular job, and get equipped with the schooling of a seminary.”³⁰

The other participant who responded to the call of full-time ministry is now studying in seminary. He testified in his writing about his experience in the prayer meeting:

I also asked for evidence of God from His words to show me that He did choose me to serve Him full-time through His calling. I made the request twice, and He did respond with His words. I was so amazed at His response through His words. Therefore now I actively get involved in theological training for my future ministry.³¹

There are also two members who did experience transformation in their attitude. One of them is a sister in our church, and she has become a leader in charge of the monthly prayer mountain meeting since the experiences of the prayer meetings. She told us how she was transformed in her testimony:

Thanks to the Lord, I have encountered God several times when I was on the Prayer Mountain. I know God more and my spiritual life grows and becomes more mature due to going up to the prayer mountain. Prayer also becomes a strong spiritual discipline in my life. I am reminded to pray all the time when I was very busy in order to get calm and get strength.³²

³⁰ Ming Xin Ji, *Feedback*, Appendix D.

³¹ Ming Xin Ji, *Feedback*, Appendix D.

³² Willa Zhu, *Testimony on the Prayer Mountain Experience*, July 10, 2017, Appendix D.

The other one is a pastor who did not like to go to the prayer mountain and spent little time in prayer in the beginning. However, he became transformed once he made up his mind that he really became serious with God. He recalled his experience:

But on one of the trips, I finally decided to be fully present. And that gave me to power to ascend the spiritual mountain. Silence became less lonely and more serene. Praying for one person, led to praying for another, and then another. Praying for myself became baring my soul, and doing business with God.... As I said, these days, I engage in more prayer and extended prayer away from the mountain. I can't say that this is solely because of my experiences up on the Prayer Mountain, but it certainly played a part.³³

There are two members who felt that the short message during the corporate time was extremely helpful, and one of them appreciated that the message was easy to understand. The same individual also stated he wanted to share it with others.³⁴ Three of them felt that the environment of the prayer mountain was wonderful and helpful to their prayer life. Some of them felt that the Spirit of God and His presence were moving in their prayers. These were the areas of greater spiritual formation in which the ten members of the interview responded. Among ten, four of them received the impact of spiritual formation which is enduring and life-changing. Two of them became full-time Christian workers. One pastor has been transformed in his prayer life. The fourth one has become a leader in promoting prayer ministry.

³³ Brian Hui, *Feedback on going to the Prayer Mountain*, July 10, 2017, Appendix D.

³⁴ Prof. Jiming Cheng, *Feedback on Prayer Mountain*, June 24, 2017, Appendix D.

Hypothesis Has Been Supported

The test results have confirmed to me that the hypothesis has been supported. The hypothesis of this thesis-project is that a Prayer Center meeting can bring greater spiritual formation, and greater spiritual formation usually facilitates a breakthrough in our prayer life. Through the results, I can conclude that two problems of the prayer life can be addressed. First, how can we help Christians improve their prayer lives? Secondly, how do we help Christians to realize the importance of their prayer life for greater spiritual formation? These two questions are related and intertwined. Prayer life will bring us greater spiritual formation, and greater spiritual formation will in turn improve our prayer life.

The prayer environment is important for us to improve our prayer life. In the surroundings of the Prayer Center meeting, the quietness, and beautiful scenery of the mountain enable us to draw near to God who is the creator. We can easily be drawn to worship His greatness and wisdom in His creation observing mountains and beautiful trees and flowers. In the prayer meeting, the participant needs to be secluded in a cabin individually for a solitude moment with God for two hours so that he or she can be calmed down before God and the participant can focus his mind and emotion on God. Through this practice, he can easily be cleansed in heart by God and he can be filled with the Holy the Spirit and the words of God.

After the solitude moment, the participant will join together for corporate worship and prayer. The powerful and short message, the theme-related songs, and the well-prepared prayer items in corporate meeting will make the participants feel

comfortable and cohesive, and motivated to pray. Lastly the sequence is important. The solitude moment has to be placed first before the corporate moment. The spiritual readiness of the individual is conducive to the effectiveness of a corporate prayer meeting. Through these preparations, the participants will feel that prayer is enjoyable, encouraging, and invigorating. The participants will come back after the first experience of the prayer mountain meeting; they will grow their prayer life and love to pray more in daily life.

In regard to the second question of how we can help Christians realize the importance of their prayer life to improve their spiritual formation, the positive results of the survey both in the quantitative questionnaire and qualitative interview feedback are overwhelming. The qualitative feedback of the ten participants shows a greater sense of spiritual formation for them after the prayer meeting. Greater spiritual formation will generate a strong motivation for prayer for the participants, and it will definitely improve their prayer life. Their attitude towards prayer and their willingness to spend time in prayer will be enhanced after their experience of the Prayer Center meeting, according to their feedback.

Impact on Ministry

There are two strong impacts on church ministry from the Prayer Center meeting in my church. The participants have been willing to organize a small group to go for a prayer mountain meeting once a month since almost two years ago. They take the initiative and I provide help in terms of the short message in the corporate session. This

ministry was started in 2016. The female who took strong leadership on this ministry is the one who went up once to the prayer mountain prayer meeting and experienced greater spiritual formation over there. At that particular time, God answered her prayer. As a result of that experience, her conviction in prayer ministry was uplifted. Therefore, she loved to go up and encouraged people to go, and her prayer life has been growing since that experience.

Another ministry impact is the Wednesday prayer meeting. The Wednesday prayer meeting is a weekly church prayer meeting. We hope that everyone will come to this prayer meeting, but the attendance of this church prayer meeting is not very encouraging. We have fewer than ten people attending this prayer meeting regularly. However, the number attending the prayer meeting has grown since two years ago. The number in attendance is now around 20 or more from less than ten people before. The Elder who takes leadership of this prayer meeting has become more sensitive towards the guidance of the Holy Spirit in leading this prayer meeting. The format of this prayer meeting is not mechanical, but follows the flow of the Holy Spirit. People are fond of coming to the prayer meeting and they enjoy it. One of the strong reasons for this improvement is due to more people whose prayer mountain experience has given them a deeper hunger for prayer.

Effect on a Similar Ministry

The Prayer Center meeting experience can provide a good solution to labor shortages in God's kingdom. Jesus told us that we need to pray for the workers to reap

the harvest.³⁵ My church experiences God's generous love by calling two brothers to be full-time ministry workers as a result of the prayer meeting. Now I am very convinced that I will use prayer as a channel to get Christian workers. Through prayer, God keeps on calling people within the church and from outside of the church to serve Him.

I will share my conviction from the scriptures with the leaders of two Chinese churches. These two Chinese churches frequently invite me to preach to their congregations on Sundays. They need Christian workers and I will tell them that they need to spend time in prayer so that their needs can be fulfilled. I bring two full-time coworkers from my church who received their calling from God through prayers on the mountain to witness this truth to them. Once the leaders agree with this approach, I will ask for the opportunity to share this vision to their congregations. I want to make sure that the congregations agree with my vision before I provide them a plan for fasting and prayer. I will encourage them to pray to God for this need, both on the prayer mountain meetings and in other prayer meetings as well. I will constantly check on them whether they have been faithful to following the plan for fasting and prayer. Then I will evaluate the plan after a period of time in order to see if they have been rewarded by God.

Adapt to Less Similar Ministry

The Prayer Center meeting format can be adapted to small group ministry in my church. I am going to train prayer leaders within each small group. The prayer leaders

³⁵ Matthew 9:37-38.

may be two to three people within a group. I will bring them or encourage them to go to the Prayer Center meeting so that their life can be transformed for greater spiritual formation. Then, in turn, they could influence their group members in their prayer life. One sister told me that she really loved the experience of the Prayer Center meeting, and she started to bring all her complaints and problems to God through prayer. As a result of doing that, she felt much better.

I will also give recommendations of my Prayer Center meeting experience to non-Asian churches as the Lord opens doors for me. However, I will check out the culture of the church to learn if it is similar or not to Chinese or Asian churches. If the culture is not the same, then I will provide a different format for the Prayer Center meeting. I will let them spend one hour only instead of two in solitude, while I give them two hours instead of one in worship and prayer in a corporate gathering. I strongly believe that the focus is God, and the method is second. Both the solitude moment and group gathering can help us experience the presence of God. Some Christians in the African church enjoy dancing in a group worship. No matter how different in culture a church is, each church needs a lot of workers in their ministry and a dynamic spiritual life. To have a good prayer life is one of the important channels to fulfill these two needs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis-project began as an exploration of the relationship between prayer and spiritual formation. In chapter one, I hypothesized that if Christians

could learn how to improve their prayer life, then they would experience a closer relationship with God. One possible way to improve prayer life that was explored involved having a group of people participate in a Prayer Center meeting. In chapter two I investigated the biblical foundations for the relationship between prayer and spiritual formation by commenting on relevant scriptures. There are ample scriptural passages and examples that appear to support a relationship between prayer and spiritual formation.

In chapter three I provided commentary on relevant literature written by the spiritual giants who write about the relationship of prayer and spiritual formation. In chapters four and five, I discussed the results of a questionnaire and feedback writings that were given to a group of people who participated in a Prayer Center meeting. These results support the hypothesis that a relationship exists between a person's prayer life and spiritual formation. Through this study, the passion and vision I have for prayer and spiritual formation have continuously kindled a fire in my heart. It has been gratifying to learn that a program I developed to increase a congregant's prayer life by participating in a Prayer Center can lead to greater spiritual formation.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRAYER CENTER STUDY (ENGLISH)

Prayer Mountain Meeting in Scott Valley, CA June 24, 2017

Pre-test Before Prayer Mountain Meeting Survey

1. Please answer the following questions by circling the right one.
 - a. Your Age:
 - i. 18-25 years
 - ii. 26-35 years
 - iii. 36-54 years
 - iv. 55 – 70 years
 - v. Over 70 years
 - b. Your Gender:
 - i. Male
 - ii. Female
 - c. Your Total Length of belief:
 - i. 0-4 years
 - ii. 5-10 years
 - iii. 11-15 years
 - iv. 16-20 years
 - v. 21 years and above
 - d. Describe how active you are in your service to the Lord:
 - i. Very active
 - ii. Medium active
 - iii. Low active
 - iv. Not active
2. For each area listed below, indicate how impactful it is for encouraging your spiritual formation. For each area, please circle the answer of a scale of impact from the least to the most impact (from 0, 1, 2, 3, 4.....to 10):
 - i. Bible study (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)
 - ii. Sunday worship (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)
 - iii. Small group (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)
 - iv. special revival meeting (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)
 - v. mission trip (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)
 - vi. ministry to the Lord (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)
 - vii. prayer life (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

3. How frequently do you spend time daily in prayer?

- i. 0-5 minutes
- ii. 5-10 minutes
- iii. 11-15 minutes
- iv. 16-30 minutes
- v. 31 minutes and above.

4. How satisfied are you with your prayer life?

- i. Very much satisfied.
- ii. Considerably satisfied.
- iii. A little satisfied.
- iv. Not at all satisfied.

5. How is your attitude towards prayer?

- i. Strongly believe
- ii. Believe
- iii. Neutral
- iv. Don't believe

Post-test after Prayer Mountain Meeting Survey

1. Did you attend the prayer mountain meeting for the first time?

- i. Yes
- ii. No.

2. How many times have you attended the prayer mountain prayer meeting before?

- i. 0
- ii. 1-3
- iii. 4-6
- iv. 7-9
- v. 10 and above.

3. After attending the prayer meeting, do you feel a stronger sense of the presence of God?"

- i. Strongly agree
- ii. Agree
- iii. Neutral
- iv. Disagree
- v. Strongly disagree

4. After the prayer mountain meeting, the degree of confidence that you have that God will answer your prayers in the days to come is stronger:
 - i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Agree
 - iii. Neutral
 - iv. Disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree

5. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you agree that the environment in the mountain will help you to have a better prayer moment?
 - i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Agree
 - iii. Neutral
 - iv. Disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree

6. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you agree that the program in the mountain meeting will help you to have a better prayer moment?
 - i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Agree
 - iii. Neutral
 - iv. Disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree

7. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that you need to rebuild the broken relationships with others?
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. Does Not apply

8. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that you need to become more humble before God?
 - i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Agree
 - iii. Neutral
 - iv. Disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree

9. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that you want to serve God more fervently?
- i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. Somewhat
10. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that your passion for sharing the gospel with others will be stronger?
- i. Yes
 - ii. No
11. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that you know Jesus more?
- i. Yes
 - ii. No
12. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that you want to study the Bible more?
- i. Strongly agree
 - ii. Agree
 - iii. Neutral
 - iv. Disagree
 - v. Strongly disagree
13. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you get spiritual nourishment?
- i. Yes
 - ii. No
14. If you answer yes on 13, how?

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRAYER CENTER STUDY (CHINESE)

问卷

参加上山祷告会前的问题

1. 请用圈来回答下列问题。

- a. 年岁:
 - i. 18-25
 - ii. 26-35
 - iii. 36-54
 - iv. 55 – 70
 - v. Over 70
- b. 性别:
 - i. 男性
 - ii. 女性
- c. 信主年数:
 - i. 0-4
 - ii. 5-10
 - iii. 11-15
 - iv. 16-20
 - v. 21 以上
- d. 描述你现在侍奉主的程度:
 - i. 很投入
 - ii. 中等投入
 - iii. 很少投入
 - iv. 没有投入

2. 请从下列项目，注明它们对你灵命长进的影响程度，在每一项把数字圈上它对你影响的程度。从最小 0 到最大 10，你可以选择最适当的数字 (0, 1, 2, 3, 4.....10):

- i. 读经生活(0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)
- ii. 主日崇拜(0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)
- iii. 小组聚会(0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)
- iv. 特别聚会(0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)
- v. 短宣(0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)
- vi. 各种事奉(0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)
- vii. 祷告生活 (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

3. 你每天花多少时间祷告？
 - i. 0-5 分钟
 - ii. 5-10 分钟
 - iii. 11-15 分钟
 - iv. 16-30 分钟
 - v. 31 分钟以上.
4. 你满意你的祷告生活吗？
 - i. 非常满意.
 - ii. 大都满意.
 - iii. 不满意.
 - iv. 非常不满意.
5. 你对祷告的态度如何？
 - i. 非常相信
 - ii. 相信
 - iii. 无意见
 - iv. 不相信

参加上山祷告会后的问题

1. 你是第一次参加上山祷告会吗？
 - i. 是
 - ii. 否
2. 你曾参加过几次上山祷告会？
 - i. 0 次
 - ii. 1-3 次
 - iii. 4-6 次
 - iv. 7-9 次
 - v. 10 次以上

3. 参加完这个祷告会后，你会强烈的感觉到神的同在？
- i. 非常同意
 - ii. 同意
 - iii. 无意见
 - iv. 不同意
 - v. 非常不同意
4. 参加上山祷告会后，你对相信上帝听你祷告的程度会增加。
- i. 非常同意
 - ii. 同意
 - iii. 没有意见
 - iv. 不同意
 - v. 非常不同意
5. 参加上山祷告会后，你同意山上的环境会帮你助有段美好的祷告时刻吗？
- i. 非常同意
 - ii. 同意
 - iii. 没有意见
 - iv. 不同意
 - v. 非常不同意
6. 参加上山祷告会后，你同意祷告会的安排内容会帮你助有段美好的祷告时刻吗？
- vi. 非常同意
 - vii. 同意
 - viii. 没有意见
 - ix. 不同意
 - x. 非常不同意
7. 参加上山祷告会后，你会觉得有需要与别人重建和好的关系 吗？
- xi. 有需要
 - xii. 没需要

8. 参加上山祷告会后，你是否感到有需要在神面前更谦卑？

- xiii. 非常同意
- xiv. 同意
- xv. 没有意见
- xvi. 不同意
- xvii. 非常不同意

9. 参加上山祷告会后，你觉得你愿意更热心事奉主？

- xviii. 同意
- xix. 不同意
- xx. 有些少同意

10. 参加上山祷告会后，你觉得你对与人分享福音更热情？

- xxi. 同意
- xxii. 不同意

11. 参加上山祷告会后，你觉得你更认识 主耶稣？

- xxiii. 同意
- xxiv. 不同意

12. 参加上山祷告会后，你觉得你更愿意化时间去读圣经？

- xxv. 非常同意
- xxvi. 同意
- xxvii. 没有意见
- xxviii. 不同意
- xxix. 非常不同意

13. 参加上山祷告会后，你觉得你得到灵命的帮助。

- xxx. 同意
- xxxi. 不同意

14. 如果你对第 13 题的答案是同意的话，请你描述一下：

APPENDIX C

SURVEY RESULTS

Part A. Survey Results for the Prayer Mountain Meeting (Prayer Center)

Note: The total participants are 30 people among a prayer meeting of 50 attendees on June 24, 2017. The persons who finished two sections of prayers (solitude and corporate prayer) completely and were willing are participants selected for this survey. Those who did not finish two sections completely or were not willing are not participants selected for this survey. The persons who gave no answers to particular questions are considered invalid to participate in those particular questions. The survey has two sections: Section I (Pre-test) and Section II (Post-test). ***This text*** represents the results for each question.

Pre-test Before Prayer Mountain Meeting Survey

1. Please answer the following questions by circling the right one.
 - a. Your Age:
 - i. 18-25 years **2 persons**
 - ii. 26-35 years **1**
 - iii. 36-54 years **12**
 - iv.** 55 – 70 years **9**
 - v. Over 70 years **6**
 - b. Your Gender:
 - i. Male **10 persons**
 - ii. Female **20**
 - c. Your Total Length of belief:
 - i. 0-4 years **7 persons**
 - ii. 5-10 years **2**
 - iii. 11-15 years **5**
 - iv. 16-20 years **3**
 - v. 21 years and above **13**
 - d. Describe how active you are in your service to the Lord:
 - i. Very active **13 persons**
 - ii. Medium active **15**
 - iii. Low active **2**
 - iv. Not active **0**

2. For each area listed below, indicate how impactful it is for encouraging your spiritual formation? For each area, please circle the answer of a scale of impact from the least to the most impact (from 0, 1, 2, 3, 4.....to 10):

i. Bible study (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

0: *none*

1: *none*

2: *none*

3: *2 persons*

4: *3 persons*

5: *4 persons*

6: *1 person*

7: *2 persons*

8: *7 persons*

9: *5 persons*

10: *4 persons*

ii. Sunday worship (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

0: *none*

1: *none*

2: *none*

3: *none*

4: *none*

5: *2 persons*

6: *1 person*

7: *2 persons*

8: *8 persons*

9: *9 persons*

10: *8 persons*

iii. Small group (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

0: *none*

1: *none*

2: *none*

3: *none*

4: *none*

5: *2 persons*

6: *2 persons*

7: *1 person*

8: *9 persons*

9: *9 persons*

10: *4 persons*

iv. special revival meeting (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

0: *none*

1: *1 person*

2: *2 persons*

3: *2 persons*

4: *none*

5: *2 persons*

6: *1 person*

7: *6 persons*

8: *5 persons*

9: *2 persons*

10: *1 person*

v. mission trip (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

0: *none*

1: *1 person*

2: *1 person*

3: *none*

4: *1 person*

5: *2 persons*

6: *none*

7: *2 persons*

8: *5 persons*

9: *2 persons*

10: *none*

vi. ministry to the Lord (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

0: *none*

1: *1 person*

2: *none*

3: *none*

4: *1 person*

5: *6 persons*

6: *none*

7: *5 persons*

8: *6 persons*

9: *5 persons*

10: *none*

- vii. prayer life (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)
 - 0: **none**
 - 1: **none**
 - 2: **1 person**
 - 3: **none**
 - 4: **1 person**
 - 5: **2 persons**
 - 6: **3 persons**
 - 7: **2 persons**
 - 8: **5 persons**
 - 9: **8 persons**
 - 10: **5 persons**

3. How frequently do you spend time daily in prayer?

- i. 0-5 minutes **4 persons**
- ii. 5-10 minutes **8**
- iii. 11-15 minutes **6**
- iv. 16-30 minutes **7**
- v. 31 minutes and above. **5**

4. How satisfied are you with your prayer life?

- i. Very much satisfied. **5 persons**
- ii. Considerably satisfied. **18**
- iii. A little satisfied. **7**
- iv. Not at all satisfied. **0**

5. How is your attitude towards prayer?

- i. Strongly believe **15 persons**
- ii. Believe **15**
- iii. Neutral **0**
- iv. Don't believe **0**

Post-test after Prayer Mountain Meeting Survey

1. Did you attend the prayer mountain meeting for the first time?

- i. Yes. **15 persons**
- ii. No. **15**

2. How many times have you attended the prayer mountain prayer meeting before?

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| i. 0 | 13 persons |
| ii. 1-3 | 6 |
| iii. 4-6 | 6 |
| iv. 7-9 | 0 |
| v. 10 and above. | 5 |

3. After attending the prayer meeting, do you feel a stronger sense of the presence of God?"

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| i. Strongly agree | 14 persons |
| ii. Agree | 13 |
| iii. Neutral | 3 |
| iv. Disagree | 0 |
| v. Strongly disagree | 0 |

4. After the prayer mountain meeting, the degree of confidence that you have that God will answer your prayers in the days to come is stronger:

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| i. Strongly agree | 13 persons |
| ii. Agree | 13 |
| iii. Neutral | 3 |
| iv. Disagree | 1 |
| v. Strongly disagree | 0 |

5. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you agree that the environment in the mountain will help you to have a better experience in prayer?

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| i. Strongly agree | 18 persons |
| ii. Agree | 11 |
| iii. Neutral | 1 |
| iv. Disagree | 0 |
| v. Strongly disagree | 0 |

6. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you agree that the program in the mountain meeting will help you to have a better experience in prayer ?

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| i. Strongly agree | 9 persons |
| ii. Agree | 17 |
| iii. Neutral | 4 |
| iv. Disagree | 0 |
| v. Strongly disagree | 0 |

7. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that you need to rebuild the broken relationships with others?
- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| i. Yes | 25 persons |
| ii. No | 4 |
| iii. Does Not apply | 0 |
8. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that you need to become more humble before God?
- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| i. Strongly agree | 22 persons |
| ii. Agree | 7 |
| iii. Neutral | 1 |
| iv. Disagree | 0 |
| v. Strongly disagree | 0 |
9. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that you want to serve God more fervently?
- | | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| i. Yes | 29 persons |
| ii. No | 0 |
| iii. Somewhat | 1 |
10. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that your passion for sharing the gospel with others will be stronger?
- | | |
|--------|-------------------|
| i. Yes | 29 persons |
| ii. No | 1 |
11. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that you know Jesus more?
- | | |
|--------|-------------------|
| i. Yes | 28 persons |
| ii. No | 2 |
12. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you feel that you want to study the Bible more?
- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| i. Strongly agree | 18 persons |
| ii. Agree | 12 |
| iii. Neutral | 0 |
| iv. Disagree | 0 |
| v. Strongly disagree | 0 |
13. After the prayer mountain meeting, do you get spiritual nourishment?
- | | |
|--------|-------------------|
| i. Yes | 28 persons |
| ii. No | 2 |

14. If you answer yes on 13, how?

There were 21 persons among the 28 “yes” answers above who said that they got greater spiritual formation after the prayer mountain meeting in three areas: they felt close to God, they enjoyed God, they felt a sense of humility before God.

APPENDIX D

QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK

Feedback on the Prayer Mountain Meeting

Note: 7 out of 10 were written in Chinese and are translated into English.

Paul Lai — July 3, 2017

College was an exciting time for my spiritual growth, as exposure to other Christians with different experiences, spiritual gifts, and church backgrounds enriched and deepened my own faith. But towards the end of my college years, the same openness that helped me to see other Christians' blessings also helped me to see, with new eyes, the riches of my own church heritage.

Even though I'd only attended my Chinese immigrant church in my teenage years, and though I tended to appreciate it as one does when one's faith is a young adult's choice rather than an inherited habit, I still approached the Mandarin-speaking congregation members with a little hesitation, even suspicion. Maybe it's because when I was an unknown teenage boy running around their church with their teenaged daughters, I was greeted with a little suspicion.

Returning to my home church, though, in the summers of an eventful college career, I found a different relationship to the adults in the Mandarin-speaking congregation. This change was both represented and in no small part facilitated by Nhu

Tran. In my head, I'd memorized his name as "Neutron," though he may have even made a joke about himself along those lines.

I remember meeting him when I was a teenager, he a jovial older man (perhaps in his forties at the time) with a wide smile and ready handshake. He had neither the dignified, austere bearing of the distant church elders or the parental protectiveness of your fellowship friend's uncle, but instead, the quick warmth and loud laugh, the unpolished demeanor and unvarnished enthusiasm of a beautiful fool for Christ, as one imagines of St. Francis or maybe Zacchaeus. He had a gospel-tinged joy that was irrepressible, and he did not discriminate to whom he expressed that fervor or affection.

He worked at the church, often holding umbrellas or folding bulletins, sometimes singing in choir or teaching a devotional, and often seemed himself a fixture of the building, more comfortable than the pews, more constant than the pulpit.

One day, I visited the church mid-week on some errand, and Nhu Tran and I struck up a conversation. I found myself sharing unpretentiously about the things God was doing in my life. Nhu Tran had a way of opening you up like that. Even more unpretentiously, he began sharing about a place he went to pray.

It was a getaway, not far, a twenty-five minute drive into the Santa Cruz Mountains, appropriately named The Prayer and Fasting Mountain of the World, a mountainous retreat center festooned with zealous Korean prayer warriors and dotted with small private prayer huts, where one could go away and seek the Almighty in happy solitude for as long as one wanted. And would I like to go with him some time? In retrospect, it occurs to me how strange a 20 year-old I was, that few invitations

would've appealed to me more than going to a mountain retreat for solitary prayer with a 50-year-old Chinese man. But indeed, it sounded like just what my soul hungered for, and we arranged to go.

The trip, when it came, surprised me with the same unpretentious joy as Nhu Tran did. We hopped in my sporty sedan, drove through winding hills while Nhu Tran told me story after story of his troubled past before Christ and his remarkable life after, and as we neared the tree-covered hills where retreat centers neighbored each other, he watched the roads and pointed out the turns like a soldier returning after the long way home.

The Prayer and Fasting Mountain was a small and quick turnoff marked by a simple, carved wooden sign, the kind you easily miss if you're not looking for it. In English and Korean, it announced itself, the words so much grander but the markers so much humbler than the campy all-service retreat centers in proximity.

Up the narrow road to a gate that Nhu Tran knew to get out of the car and open, we drove into a low ebb between two hills that nestled the middle of what must have looked like a miniature version of a retreat resort—a near amphitheater, gardened rows, circles of trees, and cabins dotted throughout. But though the territory was large enough, the appearance of “miniature” came from the size of cabins, A-framed like the simple living quarters of a camp but no larger than one person could comfortably fit in. Like a closet.

Nhu Tran showed me to the office where we signed in (literally, signed our names on a sheet of paper and, wordlessly greeted by a Korean woman behind a

window, made ourselves at home). We walked along a path, passing one cabin with shoes outside that indicated someone occupied it, but soon finding two, three, more that were empty. Nhu Tran pointed with his hand, holding a tattered Chinese Bible, at one or two cabins I might like to pick, or anywhere as he swept his arm across the landscape of spots open at this odd mid-day hour for a church mouse and a hungry college student to seek God in.

I don't remember which one cabin he took, but I remember mine. A sliding door, a small window, a simple carpet, and a sign that read, "Please clean up after yourself" and "Bless you" or something like that. I had left my shoes outside and knelt with Bible and journal in hand. We'd agreed on an hour before meeting outside again. The small room's air was fresh, faintly scented of the redwoods outside, where birds made the only noise that would cut into the silence.

I think the usual direction of this narrative is that I would struggle for many minutes to find the concentration to pray, and only after wrestling flesh and demons for a seeming eternity, I would finally still my soul enough to hear him. That was indeed the pattern of many future visits to the Prayer Mountain. But this first time, I believe God had mercy on a spiritual simpleton prone to wander, and gave me a really fulfilling time. I don't remember what I prayed about. It was probably big plans for ministry, and definitely that girl I liked. There were songs, and journal entries, and awkward silences between baring my soul and staring at my toes. There was also an unmistakable Presence, God's Spirit arriving in ways just as I needed in that hungry youthfulness.

Nhu Tran and I reconvened, both visibly exuberant, he rejuvenated and I slightly wizened. We drove back, chatty and grateful. I think we may have even sung in the car together. He'd shared a sacred place with me, and I'd been there with him.

For the next few years, that sacred place with no function or motive other than prayer became a sacred place for me. I went when seeking my direction, in ministry or calling. I went one late night, agonizing about that same girl I liked who was now my girlfriend (and is now my wife). I started going to the mountain once every couple months, until the Korean woman in the office would recognize me, until I'd gotten to know the different shapes and sizes of the many cabins that stretched up the mountain, and the shapes and sizes of different prayers God would bring me through—my modest versions of laments like Jeremiah, praises like David, longings like Paul, silences like Elijah.

By the end of my college years, I had returned to my home church only to be sent by them and God to a new church plant, where Pastor John Lai (no relation) led the three congregations—Mandarin, Cantonese, and English—and I was invited to help grow the English group. John Lai was a visionary of prayer, and one day I mentioned to him briefly this story of Nhu Tran (John knew him well) and The Prayer and Fasting Mountain of the World. If Nhu Tran had brought a hungry urchin to an endless fine banquet, my telling Pastor Lai about the Prayer Mountain was like bringing a fine gourmand and world's most enthusiastic host to the freest buffet.

We drove there together, and with reverence and humility, Pastor Lai greeted the place's special design with the same embrace that I had with Nhu Tran. But while he

prayed there, I think God gave Pastor Lai a deeper impression and greater burden than I ever imagined in my tiny vision and self-centeredness. God gave Pastor Lai a vision of generations coming to pray and seek God, filled with the passion to pray that would overpopulate every cabin at the center and every heart in each room.

Pastor Brian Hui—July 10, 2017

Going up to the Prayer Mountain was a challenge that wasn't without its reward. Like most people, prayer—especially extended prayer—was and remains a challenge for me. How could I possibly pray for hours? What will I say? I'm sure I'll get bored. I'll get sleepy. I'll lose interest. Plus, there's the added inconvenience of driving out to the Prayer Mountain on a Saturday morning, a day that I'd prefer to sleep in.

I went up to the Prayer Mountain several times. And while it is a geographical mountain, it is also a spiritual and psychological mountain. To get there, you must drive an hour south, traversing through the Santa Cruz Mountains. When you finally arrive on the property, you must carefully maneuver uphill around dangerous curves on a one lane road.

But when you arrive, while you are surrounded by beautiful trees, you are also surrounded by silence. The prayer "houses" available aren't comfortably appointed, they're spare by design. And then there is the long internal journey of praying.

During my first several trips up the Prayer Mountain, I made it up the physical mountain, but not the spiritual mountain. I gave in to sleep. I was worried about

unfinished work. Honestly, I didn't want to be there so I allowed myself mentally to do other things.

But on one of the trips, I finally decided to be fully present. And that gave me the power to ascend the spiritual mountain. Silence became less lonely and more serene. Praying for one person led to praying for another, and then another. Praying for myself became baring my soul and doing business with God. It was still labor, mind you. But at the top of that spiritual mountain was a view—a view of God, others, and myself.

Now, could I have experienced this somewhere else, somewhere more conveniently located? Sure. And I now do. But there is also something about prayer that is a journey, a series of tests, like scaling a mountain, away from cell reception, fully removed, after which you're rewarded with a gratifying and joyful view. As I said, these days, I engage in more prayer and extended prayer away from the mountain. I can't say that this is solely because of my experiences up on the Prayer Mountain, but it certainly played a part.

Willa Zhu—July 10, 2017

When I was young, I remembered that I wanted to go up to the mountain to see the sunrise. One morning I woke up early, dressed in a heavy jacket, climbed to the mountaintop and watched the sun rising from the dark in the early morning. When I did see the sun rising up gradually, I felt so excited. The excitement of that moment still stays in my memory.

When I came to HOC6 church, I was so surprised to figure out that it only takes one hour drive to go to a mountain where we can pray! The mountain is called the Prayer and Fasting Mountain. Over there, I experienced that I met God, listening to His voice. This wonderful spiritual experience was far better than my first experience of seeing the sunrise.

Everyone has a busy daily schedule, having different challenges that are full of responsibilities. If we can go up to the prayer mountain, setting aside all the chores we need to do, and focus on God and communicating with Him alone, we can get refreshed and recharged.

I became used to going to the Prayer Mountain to pray. I want to and I need to go there. Thanks to the Lord, I have encountered God several times when I was on the Prayer Mountain. I know God more and my spiritual life grows and becomes more mature due to going up to the prayer mountain. Prayer also becomes a strong spiritual discipline in my life. I am reminded to pray all the time when I am very busy in order to get calm and get strength.

Lisa Shen—July 3, 2017

About two years ago, I went up to the prayer mountain to pray. The air was fresh, and the temperature was cool, and I also could hear the prayers in different kinds of languages on the Prayer Mountain. I was reminded by this phenomenon of what Paul said in 2 Timothy 1:1-2, “I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and

thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.”

Prayer is the time we draw near to God. In the solitude of the moment with the Lord, we have to focus on God alone. The mountain surroundings can help us easily focus on God more than when we pray down the mountain. Our heart becomes easily calm and nothing will bother us. However, to me, when I spent almost two hours alone outdoors, I felt fatigue. When in the corporate prayer, I also easily felt the movement of the Holy Spirit. It was a great moment of praying together and singing together.

It was a great experience to everyone. However, to me I felt so tired, for it takes two hours in a round trip. The road is not straight and it is steep climb up to the mountain. Therefore, it is not good for someone who has physical limits like me.

Shu-fen Yang—June 24, 2017

I was able to concentrate on myself and on God on the mountain. I was far away from home, and I turned off my cell-phone, to be alone with God. When I faced my God in prayer, His righteousness, love, and holiness made me feel awe before Him, and I couldn't help but praise Him. My heart was full of joy and thankfulness. And I saw myself so unworthy before Him.

And I was also feeling sorry for my uncleanness and I felt obligated that I should love my family members and my friends more. When I remembered that my parents have not been saved I felt so disappointed and helpless. I needed the mercy of God. When I felt that my small group members had a great need and I couldn't fulfill their

needs. I cried to God for help! God responded to me that His grace is sufficient for you, for His power is made perfect in weakness. Once I heard His response, I was strengthened inside. I was encouraged so that I praised him and was willing to live for him.

Wang Xiao Jun—July 3, 2017

Pastor John is known for prayer ministry in the church. He is a pastor who emphasizes prayer ministry. He is the example of prayer for us. He always teaches us to pray and brings us to the mountain to pray. The church developed prayer ministry on the mountain a long time ago. Recently almost once a month we have been going to the prayer mountain in a small group.

On February 28 of 2004, when I came to this church not long ago, my husband and I had a chance to go up to the prayer mountain with the whole church to attend an anniversary prayer event. I was so impressed that I felt I wouldn't forget it all my life. After that experience I keep on going there every year, and I keep on experiencing the good moments with the Lord on the prayer mountain.

On June 24 of 2017, we set up a goal of 50 people going up there for all three congregations: Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. We were surprised to end up having 64 people going up there. Personally, I will share three things in getting involved in the Prayer Mountain meeting. I treasured the solitary moments (about two hours) with the Lord, enjoying the intimacy with Jesus. In these moments, I was totally refreshed, cleansed, and recharged, and satisfied with joy and love in the Lord.

Every time I have gone up to the prayer mountain, my vision for prayer has been enlarged. I have prayed more for the church, for the community, for the nation, and for the world. I have a heavy burden for prayer! When we gathered together in a corporate prayer moment, I could sense the power of prayer and the unity of prayer. Our church is not a big church, but we have three different congregations. In the group prayer, we experienced the unity in diversity! Psalm 66: 4 says, “All the earth worship you; they sing praises to you, sing praises to your name.”

Prof. Jiming Cheng—June 24, 2017

To respected pastor John: Peace in the Lord. I received your sharing ppt. for the subject of Praise and Prayer in the Prayer Mountain meeting that we just finished on 6/24. I studied your ppt. again twice diligently. Your short presentation speaks a lot to me; even your wordings are brief. Your presentation is terse but practical.

Your message is easy for us to learn and easy for us to pass it on. I treasure your sharing ppt. and it is valuable and it will definitely strengthen my teaching on the subject of Praise and Prayer class in my theological seminary classes. I am so proud of you who became my pastor and my spiritual mentor. Thank you again!

Pastor Sidney Yen—7/4/2017

In the Bible, Jesus showed inspirational examples of praying and talking to God the Father, on the mountain. As the Lord’s disciple in the modern age, I have followed His example and frequently have gone to a fasting prayer mountain in Scott Valley, CA

to have a quiet time with the Lord Jesus and the Heavenly Father. It was peaceful, and inspirational, and I felt very near to God, and just like Psalm 3:4, “I was crying to the LORD with my voice, And He answered me from His holy mountain.” To me I feel that I am intimately talking to Him and listening to His voice in person.

It was once on the prayer mountain four years ago that I received a clear calling from the Lord to serve Him full-time after I anxiously prayed for His confirmation of His calling to me. And I was then determined to quit my secular job and seek to become equipped with seminary education.

Ming Xin Ji—July 10, 2017

In 2003, I went to the prayer mountain to pray for the first time. I felt a wonderful spiritual revival. I felt so close to Jesus, being filled with joy, peace, and strength in my heart. Every time I went up there to attend the prayer meeting I also experienced the same happy moment.

Our pastor is a pastor who emphasizes prayer ministry. Now the church has monthly prayer meetings on the mountain in a small group size. I love going up to prayer monthly. It seems to me that my prayer life reaches the high peak when I go up to the prayer mountain to pray monthly. In Matthew 11: 28-29, Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” I experienced that the promise of Jesus was precious and real to me when I

prayed on the prayer mountain, and all my worries and burdens were gone, and I enjoyed rest in God!

God gave me a song in the prayer mountain which I won't forget easily. The song is "Casting all your worries to God." The song let me experience the peace that the Bible describes in Philippians 4: 6-7: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

I was encouraged in the prayer mountain meeting by the Lord to pray for my spiritual growth, for my church, my family, my community, nation, and the world. I also asked for evidence of God from His words to show me that He did choose me to serve Him full-time through His calling. I made the request twice, and He did respond with His words. I was so amazed at His response through His words. Therefore, now I am actively involved in theological training for my future ministry.

Li Na—June 24, 2017

This is my third time since last summer to go to the Prayer Mountain meeting. I have heard that someone was spending the whole night to pray in this mountain. I have been longing to come to this prayer mountain. Since I came to HOC6 to attend the church here, I was very excited to hear that the church would have a prayer meeting once a year in this Korean praying mountain.

When I first came here, brother Kecai handed me a prayer list and I needed to find a quiet place to be alone to pray. Then I went to the woods, listening to the music of praising God in my ear phone. In such a beautiful mountain, breathing in the fresh air, I can really enjoy praising God. In such quiet place, I feel that I am with the Lord alone, pouring my heart to praise Him. Such precious solitary moments with the Lord came to an end so quickly. And then I joined the corporate prayer time. My pastor shared a very short message: "Please send me!" And after the message, we sang a song: "Hi-Ne-Ni (please send me) I am here." Then I was so touched with tears running down my cheeks. And I responded to the Lord: "I am here, please send me!"

The second time I went up to the prayer mountain, I spent time with a sister praying together. After we finished praying together in the solitary moment with the Lord, we walked to the chapel to attend the group prayer meeting together. We heard and saw that there were people with different kinds of ethnic backgrounds singing and praising, and praying in the different spots of the prayer mountain. Some of them even were singing with guitar, and praying in different kinds of language, like Korean, Spanish, and even other tongues. And I got a feeling that we will be like that when we go up to Heaven in the future.

And this was the third time I went up there. I got a feeling totally different from the previous two times. I had had a great expectation of going up to the prayer mountain, and I was really enjoying the moment in the first two times. This time I needed to serve, for I was the leader for organizing the whole event. I needed to

prepare lots of things for the meeting, and I didn't expect that I would have a solitary moment with the Lord.

However, once I arrived in the prayer mountain, I was very excited. I spent the solitary moment with a couple of sisters and one friend who is a new Christian and has not been baptized yet. When we prayed, she was so touched and her tears were running down her cheeks. All the pressures and burdens in her heart were released. When we came to the corporate prayer time, the group members were required to examine our heart and cleanse thoughts, preparing a longing heart to seek the face of God.

When I finished praying for a short moment I had a deep longing inside, longing to be cleansed by God. I cried before God, and I was filled by the Holy Spirit. I was so satisfied in my spirit. The moment I spent with the Lord was so brief but it was awesome. I was so happy, beyond anything language could describe.

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